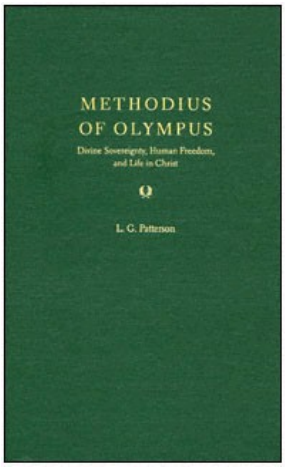
METHODIUS
OF OLYMPUS
Divine Sovereignty, Human Freedom, and Life in Christ
L. G. Patterson

Methodius of Olympus

Divine Sovereignty, Human Freedom, and Life in Christ

L. G. Patterson

The Catholic University of America Press
Washington, D.C.

Copyright © 1997
The Catholic University of America Press
All rights reserved
Printed in the United States of America

The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standards for Information Science—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library materials, ANSI Z39.48-1984.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOGING-IN-PUBLICATION DATA

Patterson, L. G. (Lloyd George), 1929–
Methodius of Olympus: divine sovereignty, human
freedom, and life in Christ/L.G. Patterson.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
1. Methodius, of Olympus, Saint, d. 311
I. Title.
BR1720.M5P37 1997
270'. 1'092—dc20
[B]
96-29371
ISBN 0-8132-0875-0 (cloth : alk. paper)

TO THE MEMORY OF BROOKS OTIS
Christian, Scholar, Mentor

"In every generation, [Wisdom] enters into holy souls,
and makes them friends of God and prophets."
Sapientia VII.27

Contents

Preface xi

Introduction 1

- Methodius and Origen 4
- Methodius' Theological Synthesis 7
- Methodius and Third-Century Asceticism 9
- Methodius As a Writer of Dialogues 11
- Methodius As Theologian 13

1. The Author of the Writings 15

- The Evidence from Tradition 16
  - "Methodius of Olympus" 17
  - "Bishop and Martyr" 18
  - The Survival of the Writings 21
  - The Slavic Methodius 24
  - The Remnant Greek Methodius 25
- The Evidence of the Writings 26
  - De sanguisuga 26
  - De cibis 27
    - De cibis on the Resurrection of Bodies 28
    - De cibis and the Criticism of Origen 30
  - De libero arbitrio 31
- Conclusion and Anticipation 33

2. De libero arbitrio: Dualism and the Problem of Evil 35

- The Title 38
- The Structure of the Dialogue 39
  - The Prefatory Exhortation 40
  - The Opening and Initial Exchanges 41
    - Against Two Uncreated Realities 44

Evil As Quality or Substance 48
The Intervention of the Second Protagonist 48
Evil As a Quality of Matter 49
Evil As Genus or Species 49
The Initial Arguments in Retrospect 49
Aristotle, Plato, and the Stoa 51
The Orthodox Speaker on the Free Will 52
The Sources of the Orthodox View 55
The Conclusion of the Work: The Purpose of Creation 57
Origen and Gnosticism in the De libero arbitrio 60
3. The Symposium: Chastity and the Plan of Salvation 64
Preliminary Matters 67
The Structure of the Symposium and Its Purpose 67
The Historical Setting of the Discourses 70
The Theological Sources of the Symposium 71
The Divine Economy: Discourses I–III 72
Discourse I 72
Discourse II 74
Discourse III 76
Adam and Christ 77
Christ and the Church 79
The Ascetic Life: Discourses IV–VIII 81
Discourse IV 82
Discourse V 85
Discourse VI 88
Discourse VII 92
Discourse VIII 95
Christ and Baptism 100
Fate, Determinism, and Astrology 102
Discourse VIII in Retrospect 104
The Final Discourses and Conclusion 105
Discourse IX: The Consummation of All Things 105
The New Creation 107
The Day of Resurrection 109
The Final Consummation 110
Methodius' Sources 112
Discourse X and the Conclusion of the Symposium 113
Discourse X and Jotham's Fable 114
The Speech of Arete 116
The Hymn of Thecla 118
The Symposium and Methodius' Theology 120

4. Origen in the *Symposium* 123

The Study of the Scriptures 125

"Shadow, Image, and Reality" 127

The Literal Sense in the *Symposium* 129

The "Begetting" and "Becoming Human" of the Word 131

The Fall and Restoration of Souls 136

Two Specific Points 137

"In the Image" 138

"The Tabernacle" 139

Origen in the Symposium 140

5. De resurrectione and the Initial Criticism of Origen 141

The Composition of the Aglaophon 141

The Criticism of Origen As a Later Consideration 143

The Treatment of Origen 145

The Opening of the Dialogue 148

The Initial Discourses 150

The Introduction of the Excerpt from Origen on Psalm 1:5 151

The Views of Aglaophon 153

The Views of Proclus 154

The Response of Eubolius 156

Eubolius on Sin, Death, and Resurrection 157

Eubolius on the "Coats of Skins" 158

Death As Antidote 159

The Three Laws 160

Eubolius' Discourse and the Purpose of the Dialogue 160

The Response of Memian and the Excerpt from Origen 162

The Transitory Body 162

The Tabernacle of the Body 163

Memian on 1 Corinthians 15:50 164

The Feast of Tabernacles Revisited 166

The Intervals of Time 168

The Criticism of Origen 170

The "Bodily Form" and the Spiritual Body 171

The "Gnashing of Teeth" and the "Dry Bones" 175

"Sown a Physical, Raised a Spiritual Body" 177

The Spherical Body of the Resurrection 178

Lazarus and the Rich Man: The Corporeal Soul 179

Disembodiment and Sin, and Conclusion 181

Methodius, Origen, and the Opponents in the Aglaophon 184

Methodius and Gregory of Nyssa on Embodiment 186

"On the Making of Humanity" 187

The Formation of the Image of God 188

The Intervals of Time 189

The Resurrection of the Bodily Structure 190

"On the Soul and Resurrection" 191

The Relation of the Soul, the Body, and the Passions 191

A Debate with Methodius 192

The Resurrection Body 194

Gregory and Methodius in Retrospect 195

The Aglaophon in Methodius' Writings 197

The Aglaophon and the Xeno 198

6. De creatis and the Later Criticism of Origen 200

Photius' Report 201

The Scope of the Dialogue 203

"Church" 203

Origen's "Reserved Teaching" 204

The "Days of Creation" 206

"Eternal Creation" 208

Methodius' View of Origen in the Xeno 212

Methodius' Treatment of the Word in the Xeno—and Arius 214

Methodius on the Divine Nature 220

Sources and Significance of Methodius' Views 223

Conclusion 228

Appendix 1: The De lepra among Methodius' Writings 235

Appendix 2: The Hymn of Thecla and the Purpose of the Symposium 240

Abbreviations 245

Bibliography 249

Index of Names 257

Index of Subjects 260

Preface

This book has been, to alter some of the last words of King Charles II, "a long time awriting." It has been somewhere in the back of my mind since I finished a doctoral dissertation on Methodius at Columbia University many years ago, a work whose analysis of the chronology of Methodius' writings and its bearing on the development of his thought I would still defend, though much else said in it is badly in the need of the revision it receives here. Meanwhile, such a revision had been anticipated in a variety of articles on Methodius himself, on Origen, on early Arianism, on the Cappadocians, and on subjects related to the theological developments of the third and fourth centuries in which they all played significant roles.

As now completed, if such a work can ever be said to be completed, it deals more narrowly with Methodius himself, and less with the larger scene of which he was part, than was originally intended. To be sure, it is impossible to read Methodius without reference to those whom he read, in particular Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen, but others as well. And it is difficult, to say the least, to consider Methodius without reference to those persons whom he influenced and those trends of thought to which he contributed. The possibility of his foreshadowing issues raised by Arius has frequently been noticed; and his quite specific influence on Gregory of Nyssa, similarly noticed, will be argued here in more detail than has been done before. These larger considerations, indeed, doubtless explain in large measure why Methodius has continued to be of such interest as he has. But they will be discussed here more by way of retrospect and anticipation than would ideally be the case. It is Methodius himself who is the subject of the work, and who would after all not have

had the place he had in the trends of thought of his time were it not for the intrinsic significance of his work.

In this connection, it should be remarked that the subtitle, "Divine Sovereignty, Human Freedom, and Life in Christ," should not be regarded as indicating particular theological themes, as distinct from others, around which Methodius' thought may be systematically organized. As we shall see, Methodius' views are not such as to submit to being organized under headings that might imply a systematic approach to theological issues of a later sort. Indeed, it may be doubted that many early Christian writers are capable of being approached in this way. But these preoccupations, if we may call them such, may be thought to have been the underlying issues which Methodius discerned in the work of his predecessors, developed in the course of his own writing on a variety of subjects, and left to the consideration of those who subsequently took his work into account. Those who look for a systematic presentation of these themes will, thus, be disappointed. But it is to be hoped that these preoccupations will slowly emerge as governing Methodius' treatment of the many particular subjects with which he dealt in of his writings.

It is scarcely possible to give credit to those who have, by encouragement and criticism, kept my mind on Methodius. Dr. Brooks Otis, to whose memory the book is dedicated, first directed my attention to Methodius when he was Professor of Latin at Hobart College, and I was his student. He continued to be a teacher, friend, and correspondent until his death. His own major articles on the Cappadocians, and chiefly Gregory of Nyssa, which take unusual account of the influence of Methodius, were written *inter alia* with his big books on Virgil and Ovid, while he was Professor of Classics at Stanford, and later Paddison Professor of Latin at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. His comprehensive knowledge of classical and patristic thought, and of their importance for understanding the contemporary theological issues which concerned him as a Christian believer, knew no bounds.

The Rev. Prof. Cyril C. Richardson and the Very Rev. Prof. Georges Vasilievich Florovsky were the supervisors of the doctoral dissertation already mentioned. The Rev. Prof. Richard A. Norris,

of the Union Theological Seminary, New York City, and the Rev. Prof. Brian E. Daley, S.J., of the Weston School of Theology, Cambridge, Mass. have been of continuing help over the years. Fr. Daley, in particular, has been the friendly and persistent questioner, as well as the meticulous reader, without whom the work, in its present form, would not have reached such completion as it has.

Among others, too many to be named, who have helped in a variety of ways, I should mention the faculty members and graduate students, colleagues in the Boston Patristic Society, who have more or less patiently heard me on Methodius, and offered constructive comments and advice. Among these, I should mention especially the Rev. Prof. Robert J. Daly, S.J. for his comprehensive help with matters related to Origen; Dr. Michael J. O'Laughlin, whose knowledge of the later Origenism of Evagrius Ponticus and fourth-century asceticism has shed much indirect light on my subject; and Dr. Annaweis van den Hoek, who knows much of what is to be known of Philo and Clement of Alexandria. There are others as well, though none is, of course, responsible for the work as it now stands.

My wife, Janet, and our sons, David and James, have tolerated the mysterious presence of Methodius among us with relative patience in the midst of their own busy lives. James's extensive knowledge of computers has, in particular, been invaluable.

I am happily obliged to the American Philosophical Society and the Episcopal Theological School, Cambridge, Massachusetts, for providing funds at various times for the promotion of my research. The latter's successor institution, the Episcopal Divinity School, not only allowed me the sabbatical term during which the present writing was done, but contributed toward its publication from the Theological Writing Fund, whose donor, Joan Peabody Porter, deserves particular mention for her contribution to more than one scholarly endeavor.

BELMONT, MASSACHUSETTS
PENTECOST, 1995

Introduction

Methodius, a Lycian Christian writer of the latter part of the third and early years of the fourth century, a Christian apologist, a teacher of ascetics, and a premier critic of Origen, remains a strangely obscure figure. His principal works, now reassembled in something like a coherent whole, comprise the largest body of Greek Christian remains to survive from his time, other than those of Eusebius of Caesarea—whose disinclination to celebrate a critic of Origen contributed, in some part, to leaving Methodius in obscurity. The writings are those of a distinct personality, with some skill as a literary stylist, who had a considerable knowledge of contemporary philosophy, a fascination with medical learning, and an extensive familiarity with earlier Christian writings, including at least a portion of Origen's voluminous work.

Nevertheless, Methodius' writings have chiefly been studied "incidentally," that is, for reasons only indirectly related to what they have to tell us about Methodius himself and about his place in the murky period between the death of Origen and the outbreak of the Arian controversy. The last effort at a general study of Methodius was J. Farges, *Idées morales et religieuses de Méthode d'Olympe* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1929), written with the use of Bonwetsch's then still relatively new edition of Methodius' works.[1]

[1] Farges wrote at the end of the period in which the Methodian corpus, newly reconstructed with the help of the Slavic translation by N. Bonwetsch, "Methodius," *Griechische Christliche Scriftsteller der Ersten Drei Jahrhunderte* 27 (1917), was a matter of special interest. Farges' other works on Methodius, including his *Méthode d'Olympe: "Du libre arbitre"* (Paris: Beauschesne, 1929) and *Méthode d'Olympe: "Le Banquet des dix vierges"* (Paris: Gabalda, 1932) are still useful. See also Bonwetsch's

(footnote continued on next page)

Such a bold statement requires some qualification. Attention to Methodius has never been entirely lacking. Bonwetsch's editorial work has been refined by others, in particular by A. Vaillant, who examined the Slavic and Greek texts of the dialogue commonly called *On the Free Will (De libero arbitrio),* and by H. Musurillo, who edited the ascetic discourses of the *Symposium,* the only work to survive in its entirety in Greek.[2] There was notable interest in Methodius by Italian scholars—principally but not entirely associated with the University of Turin—in the 1920s, who were especially concerned with the relation of Methodius' ethics and his eschatology.[3] More recently, English scholars have been concerned with the question of Methodius' contribution to issues later raised by Arius, while Cardinal Daniélou and others have noticed his place in the background of the

(footnote continued from previous page)

own *Die Theologie des Methodius von Olympus* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1903). Modern attention to Methodius can be dated from A. Jahn, *S. Methodius Platonizans* (Halle: 1865), itself depending on the Migne edition of the Greek fragments (*Patrologia Graeca* 18 [1857]). Among such early studies, one that deserves particular notice here is that of G. Fritschel, *Methodius von Olympus und seine Philosophie* (Leipzig: Poschel and Trepte, 1897), which speculated that Methodius had, in the course of his writing, shifted from being a proponent to an opponent of Origen. Fritschel's speculation, though too sharply drawn, gave rise to the investigation of Methodius' changing view of Origen developed in this work.

[2] A. Vaillant, ed. and trans., "Le 'De Autexousio' de Méthode d'Olympe," *Patrologia Orientalis* 22, no. 5 (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1930); H. Musurillo, trans., *Méthode d'Olympe: "Le Banquet,"* Sources Chrétiennes, no. 95 (Paris: Cerf, 1963), preceded by his *St. Methodius: "The Symposium": A Treatise on Chastity,* Ancient Christian Writers, no. 27 (Westminster, Md.: Newman, 1958). The introductions to these works deserve to be noticed as in themselves general studies of Methodius. Notice should also be taken of V. Buchheit, *Studien zu Methodios von Olympus,* Texte und Untersuchungen 69, (Berlin: Akadamie, 1958), whose study of the Greek text in the interest of establishing the authentic works confirms, among other things important to this book, the inauthenticity of the fragments *Contra Porphyrium.*

[3] See, for instance, A. Biamonti, "L'etica di Metodio d'Olimpo," and "L'escatologia di Metodio d'Olimpo," *Revista trimestrale di studi filosofice e religiosi* 3 (1922): 272–98; 4 (1923): 182–202; also see E. Buonaiuti, "The Ethics and Eschatology of Methodius of Olympus," *Harvard Theological Review* 14 (1921): 255–66. The work of the Italian school is recognized by the inclusion of J. Pépin, "Platonisme et Stoicisme chez Méthode d'Olympe," in *Forma futuri: Studi in onore del Cardinale Michele Pellegrino* (Turin: Bottega d'Erasmo, 1975), 126–44, a study of the philosophical background of the *De libero arbitrio* to which notice will be given later.

thought of Gregory of Nyssa.[4] Significantly for our purposes, some general agreement now seems to have been reached on the chronological order of the writings, on which the study of the development of his thought, and particularly of his view of Origen, largely turns.[5] At least some attention has also been paid to the place of Methodius in the Christian use of the classical dialogue form,[6] a subject to which we will return on more than one occasion.

All this said, however, it must be admitted that theological interest in Methodius has centered largely on what are ultimately "incidental" matters: his place in the background of early Arianism, the influence of his interpretation of Origen's views of embodied existence and of the eternal creation of the cosmos on later Christian thinkers, and—most recently—the evidence he provides of interest in Christian asceticism in the third century. In view of the importance of these matters, it is surprising that little interest has been exhibited in Methodius himself, or in his place in the theological era of which he is one of our few witnesses.[7]

---

[4] See esp. M. F. Wiles, "Eternal Generation," *JTS,* n.s., 12 (1961): 284–91; and "In Defence of Arius," *JTS.* n.s., 13 (1962): 339–47. But see also R. D. Williams, *Arius: Heresy and Tradition* (London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1987), 167ff. and 186ff. And also see J. Daniélou, *L'Etre et le temps chez Grégoire de Nysse* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 1970).

[5] See in particular A. Vitores, *Identidad entra el cuerpo muerto y resucitado en Origenes: Segun el "De resurrectione" de Metodio de Olimpo* (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1981), which apparently accepts the chronology of my own doctoral dissertation. The chronological order of the writings has perhaps never been entirely in doubt, with the criticisms of Origen in the *De res.* and *De creatis* placed last, and the *De lib. arbit.* early. But doubts have frequently been raised about these assumptions; for example, Bonwetsch (*Theologie,* 8–10)—arguing against Fritschel, *Methodius von Olympus*—regarded them as uncertain. As we shall see, it is now possible to be quite clear about the chronological relationship of the major writings.

[6] See M. Hoffmann, *Der Dialog bei den Christlichen Schriftstellern der ersten vier Jahrhunderte* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1966), and particularly, B. R. Voss, *Der Dialog in der Frühchristlichen Literatur* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1970), which has much of value to say about the relation of style and substance in Methodius' dialogues.

[7] Plainly, no short review such as this one can take account of all that has been written about the many aspects of Methodius' writings, and which will be noted in the course of the present work and set out in the bibliography. But particular reference should be made to two writers who have concerned themselves with the liturgical

(footnote continued on next page)

The present work makes no claim to being the sort of comprehensive general study that Farges could still attempt in 1929. While much has happened to make Methodius more accessible than he then was, much else has happened to make the issues of his time more difficult to assess. This work, however, does seek to get behind the "incidental" interests of much recent reference to Methodius, to study him for himself, and to provide the basis for a reconsideration of his contribution to the issues of his time, as he himself sheds light upon them.

It may be useful, then, to introduce this study by making reference to the particular perspectives from which he has been viewed—what we may call the several "incidental" *Methodii*—and to anticipate their bearing on what we shall set forth as a more substantial view of Methodius himself.

Methodius and Origen

Note must first be taken of Methodius' reputation as a critic of Origen. Indeed, this has been the principal perspective from the outset. The little we know of Methodius himself, other than what can be deduced from his writings, must be teased from the reports of Eusebius and Jerome, who respectively disparaged and applauded him in the light of their own views of Origen. The influence of Methodius' criticism, in the dialogue *Aglaophon: On the Resurrection (De resurrectione),* on a variety of issues relating to the fall, restoration of souls, and the present character of embodied existence, as attributed to Origen, is currently recognized to have had much to do with forming the picture of Origen presented by the "heresiologist" Epiphanius in his *Panarion* LXIV; and this picture, in its turn, had at least some-

(footnote continued from previous page)

significance of Methodius' works from different perspectives, namely, C. Riggi, "Vita Christiana e dialogo liturgio nel *Symposio* di Metodio," *Salesianum* 37 (1975): 503–45 and F. van den Paverd, "Confession (Exagoreusis) and Penance (Exomologesis) in the *De lepra* of Methodius of Olympus," *Orientalia Christiana Perodica* 44 (1978): 309–41 and 45 (1979): 45–74. Neither will figure prominently in the present work, but both contribute much to our understanding of Methodius as a person familiar and concerned with the liturgical practices of his time.

thing indirectly to do with the creation of the "Origen" who was condemned in the sixth century.[8]

But Methodius' place as a critic of Origen is also central to the reconsideration of anthropological issues raised by Origen in Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Making of Humanity (De hominis opificio)* and *On the Soul and the Resurrection (De anima et resurrectione).*[9] Moreover, Methodius' criticism of Origen on the eternal creation of the cosmos, in his dialogue *Xeno: On Created Things (De creatis),* not only sheds light on Arius' criticism of Origen's view of the eternal begetting of the Son, but has an even wider bearing on Methodius' treatment of Origen: since the Slavic translation omits the dialogue, we are dependent entirely on the Greek fragments preserved in Photius, *Bibliotheca,* for our knowledge of what appears to be a final, comprehensive treatment of more than one important aspect of Methodius' critical enterprise.

There is, then, every reason to consider Methodius as one of Origen's most influential critics. Indeed, it seems increasingly probable that his was the earliest comprehensive criticism of Origen launched from within the intellectual circles that might be expected to be sympathetic to the great Alexandrian, as Methodius' own recurrent indebtedness to Origen's scriptural interpretation shows him to have been. He is certainly the only prior authority specifically mentioned by Eustathius of Antioch in his early-fourth-century work against Origen.[10]

---

[8] See Vitores, *Identidad,* but also the more comprehensive treatment of Methodius' interpretation of Origen in J. Deckow, *Dogma and Mysticism in Early Christianity: Epiphanius of Cyprus and the Legacy of Origen,* Patristic Monograph Series, no. 13 (Macon, Ga.: Mercer, 1988), and E. A. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992).

[9] See Brooks Otis, "Cappadocian Theology as a Coherent System," in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers,* no. 12 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958) 97ff., and "Gregory of Nyssa and the Cappadocian View of Time," *SP* 14 (1976): 327ff.; and R. E. Heine, *Perfection in the Virtuous Life,* Patristic Monograph Series, no. 2 (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1975). See also J. Daniélou, *L'Etre et le temps.*

[10] The other person commonly identified as such an early critic is Methodius' virtual contemporary Peter of Alexandria. But such fragmentary evidence as we have of Peter's criticisms of Origen is not only a good deal later, but is clearly dubious in

(footnote continued on next page)

It will not be our purpose here to deny Methodius' misrepresentations of Origen on the several matters that are currently of interest. We shall, in fact, both extend their scope and offer an explanation of their origin and character. Specifically, we shall suggest that, in reviewing Origen's teaching in the light of criticism of his own "Origenist" views, Methodius came to believe that Origen had, at crucial points, been led to embrace a cosmological dualism of spirit and matter of the sort that he had himself attacked in his early *De libero arbitrio* as inconsistent with a Christian view of evil.[11] Methodius' place as a prime source of many later misrepresentations of Origen is secure.

But it will also be our purpose to show that Methodius was not the totally unsympathetic critic of Origen that this fact might suggest. Origen remains for Methodius "a man of the Church" (*De resurrectione* I.19.1), whose views on scriptural interpretation—and on much else—place him in a position of eminence that demands that he be assessed with care on those points where he was led into error. Moreover, the "much else" just mentioned includes basic theological emphases, derived through scriptural interpretations, that continue to inform Methodius' thought even in the course of his criticism of the "Origen" he rejects. Indeed, this continued influence of Origen contributes a good deal to the particular characteristics of Methodius' mature thought on the human predicament, and on the relation of

(footnote continued from previous page)

authenticity; indeed, it is suspiciously similar to that of Methodius himself. See T. Vivian, *St. Peter of Alexandria: Bishop and Martyr* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), chap. 2, as well as my comments in a review of Vivian in the *Anglican Theological Review* 61 (1990): 473–81. Eustathius mentions "Methodius of blessed memory" in connection with his criticism of Origen's idea of the resurrection of the bodily "form" (*Engast.* XXII), and thus obviously has Methodius' *De res.* to hand. Since Eustathius sees Origen's views as containing the seeds of Arianism, it is quite possible that he was familiar with Methodius' *De creat.,* whose criticism of Origen on the eternal creation of the cosmos is suspiciously similar to Arius' attack on the eternal begetting of the Son.

[11] That Methodius' view of Origen was not entirely his own fabrication will be discussed later (see below, chap. 5, notes 7 and 23). But see W. R. Schoedel, *Athenagoras: "Legatio" and "De resurrectione"* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), xxv et seq., for a discussion of issues related to Origen in what is almost certainly the contemporaneous Pseudo-Athenagoras, *De res.*

the divine to the created order of which humanity is part. The evolution of these themes in the course of his criticisms of Origen is but one of the arresting phenomena needing attention from anyone studying Methodius as a theologian in his own right.

Methodius' Theological Synthesis

It is doubtful if Methodius would have designated himself a "theologian." Nor would most of his Christian contemporaries, for whom the word implied the study of the divine beings, and would thus be either tarnished by pagan associations or reserved for the writers of the Gospels. Nevertheless, consideration of the influence of Origen on Methodius necessarily leads to the question of the formative influences on what we would now call his "theology." For Farges, as for Bonwetsch before him, Methodius was to be seen primarily as the creator of a synthesis of themes drawn from Irenaeus and Origen. But we will see that the subject is more complicated, and that such a generalization is, at least at one point, significantly misleading.

Methodius himself is a considerable help with this problem. While he seldom identifies his sources—any more than did his contemporaries—he has the inveterate tendency, in his use both of Plato and of Christian writers, to employ paraphrases and even verbal allusions that allow us access to the sources on which he draws. From the evidence that he himself thus provides, it is clear that while Origen remains Methodius' guide to matters of scriptural interpretation, and hence contributes many of the theological views imbedded in his own interpretations, there are also other voices to be heard.

Irenaeus is constantly present behind the broad picture of the divine economy of salvation, the recurrent theme against which the importance of the life of chastity is placed in the discourses of the *Symposium*. Indeed, it is the peculiar character of the *Symposium*—and the cause of much of the confusion regarding its character as a general work of theology—that it places the call to chastity in the context of a broad view of the divine plan of salvation for the redemption of both the spiritual and the physical creation now entering its last phase with the Incarnation of the Word, and regards chastity,

in an equally comprehensive way, as an anticipation of the life for which humanity is destined when souls and bodies are reunited at the resurrection. All of these themes—barring the emphasis on chastity itself—are easily recognized as coming from Irenaeus, who is specifically paraphrased and quoted in the *Symposium.*[12]

At the same time, however, in the *Symposium,* the views of Irenaeus are recast in the light of the teaching of Clement of Alexandria. It is Clement who supplies basic elements of Methodius' interpretation of the Christian life as the progressive freeing of souls from the passions that threaten them in the present circumstances of embodied existence. Moreover, Clement contributes to Methodius' particular emphasis on the danger of embracing the ascetic life from suspicions regarding the goodness of the physical creation, as well as to the function of the true ascetic—Clement's "true gnostic," Methodius' "chaste"—in the life of the general body of believers. We shall see, in fact, that the chief theological themes of the *Symposium* are the result of a working together of elements of Irenaeus' grand view of the economy of salvation and Clement's preoccupation with the freeing of souls from the passions in anticipation of the final perfection of both souls and bodies.[13]

[12] Nor is this the only evidence of reliance on Irenaeus. We shall also encounter it in various aspects of the treatment of the bodily resurrection in the *Aglaophon.* And it provides a crucial argument regarding the relation of the Word to God the Father in the *Xeno* which prevents Methodius from advancing beyond criticism of the eternal creation of the cosmos to the eternal begetting of the Word.

[13] See below, chap. 2, note 13, and chap. 3, notes 11, 12, 20, and 46. The extent of Clement's adaptations of Irenaean themes has been neglected in favor of interest in his independent debate with his gnostic contemporaries. See, for example, S. R. C. Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria: A Study in Christian Platonism and Gnosticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971). But Clement's reliance on fundamental Irenaean themes is evident in his adaptation of Irenaeus' famous statement that "the divine became human so that the human might become divine" (*AH* III.10.2, XVI.3.6, XVII.1, XVIII.7, XIX.1, 20/2; cf. IV.20.5, 33.11, 37.1,7; Vpraef.), to say that the divine became human so that the human might learn from a human being to become divine (*Prot.* I.8.4, *Paed.* I.2.4; cf. III.7, 9). Clement develops Irenaeus' question as to why humanity could not be made perfect from the beginning (*AH* IV.38.1) with his own emphasis on the necessity of the acquisition of virtue by souls (*Strom.* VI.12.96). See chap. 3, notes 11 and 12, on further adaptations of the formation of the perfect number of humanity through procreation, and the distinction

(footnote continued on next page)

Thus we must place Clement together with Irenaeus among Methodius' principal sources in the *Symposium,* the work that reveals his dependence on his predecessors in the most comprehensive fashion. While his indebtedness to Origen is far from being limited to details of scriptural interpretation, and while that indebtedness was, as we have already suggested, almost certainly one reason for the criticism of Methodius' work that led him to review Origen's teaching at crucial points, the independent appropriation of corresponding themes of Irenaeus and Clement in the *Symposium* is the most obvious characteristic of Methodius' exposition of the life of chastity there.

Methodius is, of course, like all serious thinkers, far more than the sum of his sources. Much of our effort in what follows will be directed to setting forth his thought as a subject of importance in its own right. His assistance in identifying his sources is of importance, above all, for the light it sheds on his originality. Part of the reason he took up issues raised by Origen, as he came to understand them, was his need to clarify his views regarding the perfectibility of both spiritual and physical creation, and the sovereign power of God in working to ensure that end. It was in addressing the questions raised by his "Origen" in regard to these particular matters that Methodius contributed what he did to the theological discussion of his time.

Methodius and Third-Century Asceticism

Current interest in the early history of Christian asceticism has led to a different sort of "incidental" interest in Methodius as an important source of evidence for third-century ascetic movements.[14] In fact,

(footnote continued from previous page)

between creation "according to the image" and "according to the likeness" of God. In fact, Clement's own evaluation of the views of his gnostic opponents involves an independent use of major arguments drawn from Irenaeus. Thus it is not surprising that Methodius should find Clement's adaptations of Irenaeus useful points of departure for his own interpretations of Irenaeus along lines that Clement himself had already anticipated. Indeed, it is this aspect of Methodius' use of sources that draws attention to the neglected question of Clement's reliance on Irenaeus.

[14] See Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renun-*

(footnote continued on next page)

the *Symposium* was composed in an effort to celebrate the positive aspects of the life of chastity (ἐγκράτεια), which assume that embodiment is the source of evil. Moreover, the work is apparently dedicated to certain ascetic women—whether living together in a community or not is uncertain—who are or may likely be thought to be attracted to the figure of Thecla, the legendary companion of Paul and exemplar of "continence." These women are, in any case, deemed by Methodius to be in need of consultation with regard to the proper and improper place of the life of chastity in the divine economy. Some of these women are likely those named in the second of the two letter-treatises containing interpretations of scriptural passages on which Methodius' views have been sought, and which consequently go under the cumbersome titles of *On the Water-Leech in* Numbers *and on "The Heavens Declare the Glory of God" (De sanguisuga)* and *On the Distinction of Foods and on the Heifer in* Leviticus *with Whose Ashes Sinners Are Sprinkled (De cibis).* Both letters are of no little interest for their exegetical and theological contents, and both are of considerable importance in establishing the chronological order of the writings. But the *De cibis* is of particular interest in the present connection because it offers evidence of Methodius' continuing relation to women committed to the ascetic life, as well as of the intellectual interest of his correspondents in matters relating to the interpretation of the Scriptures.

So far as the study of Methodius himself is concerned, however, it is important once again not to let this "incidental" interest in his ascetic views become the sole reason for paying attention to his work, or even for estimating the value of his evidence for the study of third-century asceticism as such. We shall see that Methodius'

(footnote continued from previous page)

ciation in Early Christianity (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), chap. 9. On Methodius in relation to the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* and the cult of Thecla, see D. R. MacDonald, *The Legend and the Apostle: The Battle for Paul in Story and Canon* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983), chap. 5. On the more general subject of "continence," see U. Bianchi, ed., *La tradizione dell'enkrateia* (Rome: Edizioni Dell' Ateneo, 1985), with its various references to Methodius.

principal concern is directed to the interpretation of the ascetic life as part of the life of the Church rather than as an alternative to it. This concern, in fact, has much to do with the particular ways in which, in the *Symposium,* he reworks the teachings of Irenaeus and Clement in such a way as to shed light on the place of the call to chastity in the divine economy of redemption. Moreover, it is this concern that tells us most about the circumstances in which the challenge of asceticism presented itself to the Christian movement in Methodius' own time, at least as Methodius himself understood it.

We shall, in any case, not overlook the importance of Methodius' evidence regarding third-century asceticism. But we shall bring it into relation with the wider scope of Methodius' "theology."

Methodius As a Writer of Dialogues

Recurrent, if less popular, attention to Methodius as a writer of dialogues is in no way incidental to the study of his work.[15] It is still common to regard the Platonic dialogues as an ideal standard for the genre, and to regard efforts to copy their style in later centuries as wooden and didactic—even though the Platonic dialogues, for all their liveliness and ability to engage the reader, are certainly not without their own didactic characteristics. Nonetheless, we must take Methodius' use of the dialogue form seriously while trying to read his thought. Except for the letter-treatises mentioned above, Methodius' extant writings all follow Platonic models, particularly the *Protagoras* and the *Phaedo,* and of course the *Symposium.* To be sure, Jerome (*De viris illustribus* LXXXIII) reports that Methodius wrote scriptural commentaries, as well as a lengthy reply to Porphyry's attack on Christianity; and the fragments of what seems to be a commentary on Job may just possibly be his, though the surviving fragments of a *Contra Porphyrium* are not. Even so, the works that have survived demonstrate a fascination with the use of Platonic models, and have

[15] See above, note 6.

been praised by Voss as marking a "high point" in the Christian use of the dialogue form.[16]

It should be admitted, however, that our principal consideration here is not literary. We shall only very generally concern ourselves with the literary sources Methodius uses or the stylistic techniques he employs, and then only as they shed light on the presentation of his views. But this consideration, limited as it necessarily will be, is far from unimportant. Methodius' writings have commonly been read as if they were theological treatises, in which everything that is said represents either his views or those of clearly identifiable opponents. This has been the case since passages from his writings were included in the *Dialogue of Adamantius (De recta in deum fide),* the *Panarion* of Epiphanius, and the *Bibliotheca* of Photius.

This is, however, far from the truth. The views of the artificial opponents in the *De libero arbitrio* are carefully constructed in order to be shown as contradictory, as are the views of the principal opponents of the *Aglaophon: On the Resurrection,* even though they have commonly been taken to represent Methodius' understanding of the teachings of Origen. Similarly, in the *Xeno: On Created Things,* apparently a far more carefully constructed literary work, those who speak in Origen's name are manifestly expressing views that Methodius thinks are consistent with the views of Origen rather than stating positions precisely ascribed to Origen himself. In the early discourses of the *Symposium,* a distinct difference of opinion between the first two speakers regarding the importance of the command to "increase and multiply" (Gn. 1:28) is contrived with an eye to its being reconciled by the third speaker. And beyond these instances in which the views expressed by various speakers are not to be taken "at face value," some consideration is to be given to Methodius' frequently expressed view that free and open discussion of disagreements is important to the establishment of the truth (e.g., *De libero arbitrio* I, 8–9; cf. *De resurrectione* I.2). Whatever Methodius may already understand the truth to be, he constructs the views of

[16] Voss, *Dialog,* 134, note 6. On the authenticity of the fragments *Contra Porphyrium,* see Buchheit, *Studien,* 120ff.

his opponents, and the exchanges between them and their orthodox counterparts, with an eye to free, if doubtless contrived, rational discussion.

The point of these observations on the style of Methodius' writing is simply that his works should be read as employing a genre that precludes the possibility of taking passages of his writings, as they have commonly been taken, simply as if they were parts of theological treatises. The alternative to this common approach, of course, is the much more complicated—but perhaps more interesting—task of reading what Methodius says while paying attention to the context in which he—or, rather, those who speak in his name or that of his opponents—says it, and thus to try to come to terms with his basic theological views in a different but more substantial way than has often been done.[17] It is to this task that the present work is committed.

Methodius As Theologian

In the course of pursuing the aforementioned task we shall discover a person whose reflection on the work of his predecessors, while it cannot be organized in a systematic fashion, has convinced him that there is one sovereign divine reality; that the present condition of human life is preeminently the result of the misuse of human freedom; and that Christian believers have been taken up into a relationship with Christ that holds the promise that the right use of that freedom opens the way to an ultimate communion with the divine beyond that possible in the present state of embodied existence, and

[17] In an effort to stress the literary genre of Methodius' writings, we shall persistently refer to them by the name of the chief protagonists in the text, e.g., *Aglaophon* for the *De resurrectione, Xeno* for the *De creatis,* and *Sistelius* for the dialogue *Sistelius: On Leprosy (De lepra),* though we shall commonly cite the works parenthetically and in notes by their usual Latin titles, for ease in the checking of citations. An exception will be made in the case of *De libero arbitrio,* which may originally have been titled *Maximus: On God, Matter, and Free Will.* Despite the merits of this view, originally suggested by Zahn and later argued by Robinson (see J. A. Robinson, ed., *The "Philocalia" of Origen* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1893], xl et seq.), and its very general acceptance, it does not appear so titled in the manuscript traditions. For discussion of Vaillant's reluctance to accept the title "Maximus," see chap. 2, note 11.

indeed not only beyond perception but beyond knowing itself. In fact, we shall find a person whose main commitments, however unsystematically presented, are to what we now identify as "divine sovereignty, human freedom, and life in Christ."

To put the matter so simply, of course, is to overlook all of the particular circumstances and issues in which these commitments discovered themselves and were spelled out, in the face of contemporary philosophical assumptions, heretical Christian teachings, and—as Methodius finally came to believe—the teachings of Origen. It is these circumstances, and the light they shed on the development of his main commitments, that require careful reading of his works with an eye to their specific sources, purposes, and style.

We are, of course, not unconcerned here with Methodius' influence—the source of most of the "incidental" *Methodii* we have identified—as it resulted from his pursuit of these commitments. We shall inevitably deal with that influence, particularly as it is reflected in the thought of such surprisingly different figures as Arius and Gregory of Nyssa. It is there in particular, rather than in his use by the "heresiologists," that Methodius' substantial contribution to the theological currents of his time is to be found. But this not insignificant consideration is of little value apart from the close study of Methodius himself. It is he who is the principal subject of this work.

1—
The Author of the Writings

The little that is reported about "Methodius of Olympus, Bishop and Martyr" has long been recognized as largely the product of later interest in the influential figure—particularly the critic of Origen—he came to be. While this evidence may not be without value, its value lies chiefly in what it tells us about Methodius' place in the unfolding controversy over Origen rather than in what it tells us about the author of the writings that come down to us under his name. While we must pass the details of the tradition in review, it is on the writings themselves that we must finally rely for what can confidently be said about Methodius himself.

A single exception to this general principle is the sole surviving contemporary notice of Methodius, though even that comes to us at second hand. Jerome, in a testy passage in which he counsels Rufinus to deny that he ever associated himself with the views of Origen, cites as a precedent the example of "Methodius, Bishop and Martyr," who turned against Origen. And he refers in this connection to the Pamphilus-Eusebius *Apologia pro Origene,* which, he reports, asked how Methodius could dare to attack Origen when he had so frequently depended on him in his own teaching (*Contra Rufinum* I.11).[1] Jerome is not always trustworthy in handling his sources, but we shall find that there are grounds in Methodius' writings themselves

[1] See below, note 16.

for thinking that he is accurate here. Methodius, as we shall see, could easily have been viewed at Caesarea in Palestine as a "turncoat" Origenist.

We shall have occasion to return to Jerome's evidence more than once. At the moment we need only note that the quotation from the *Apologia* assumes that Methodius was alive, and that some of his writings were known at Caesarea at that time.

The Evidence from Tradition

Pamphilus died in the course of the final period of persecution which began in 304. Eusebius survived to become Bishop of Caesarea and a figure of importance in the reign of the Emperor Constantine. But no other reference to Methodius is found in Eusebius' writings. His *Praeparatio evangelica* VII.21.2–22 offers an excerpt from what we know to be Methodius' dialogue *De libero arbitrio,* but identifies its author as "Maximus." There can be little doubt that this is the work that Eusebius had in mind when he referred, among other late-second-century writers in his *Historia ecclesiastica* V.27, to the writing of "Maximus on the much-discussed question among the heretics, the origin of evil and that matter had a beginning." It is now generally recognized that Eusebius here refers to Methodius' *De libero arbitrio;* and it seems quite likely that the work originally went under the title *Maximus,* so that Eusebius may simply have been confusing title with author.[2] But the suspicion remains that Eusebius might have mentioned Methodius in some other connection had it not been that he did not like critics of Origen.

For further references to Methodius, passed over by Eusebius for whatever reason, it is thus necessary to turn again to Jerome, this time

[2] On the suggestion of Zahn and Robinson regarding "Maximus" as the title of our *De libero arbitrio,* see J. A. Robinson, *The Philocalia of Origen,* xl–xli, where it is argued that the other dialogues take their titles from their principal protagonists (e.g., *Sistelius: On Leprosy, Aglaophon: On the Resurrection, Xeno: On Created Things*), so that the work would originally have been called "Maximus," with a subtitle indicating its subject. We shall take up the question in more detail below, in chap. 2, there noting the questions raised by Vaillant, in *De Autexousio,* 630.

in *De viris illustrisibus* LXXXIII. There we find a list of Methodius' writings and the identification of their author as "Bishop of Olympus in Lycia, and later of Tyre," who died a martyr "at the end of the latest persecution, or, as others report, in the reign of Decius and Valerian, at Chalcis in Greece." But Jerome's report, when considered in detail, presents more problems than it solves, both with regard to the otherwise unconfirmed translation of Methodius to Tyre and with regard to the report of his martyrdom, which can be read in different ways but may suggest that Jerome has conflated his Methodius of Olympus (and Tyre?) with another Methodius who was martyred in Greece in the middle of the third century.

As to Methodius' episcopal see, Jerome's references must be supplemented by those of John of Damascus and Photius, both of whom later identify Methodius as Bishop of Patara in Lycia, and of Nicephorus, who has him Bishop of Myra in Lycia. On the other hand, Epiphanius, Jerome's contemporary and a person much indebted to Methodius' writings against Origen in his own *Panarion,* refers to the arguments "of Methodius *and Eubolius,"* adding the pseudonym by which Methodius is habitually represented in his dialogues, and then designating him simply as the "blessed presbyter."[3] We should add that these sources provide no such circumstantial evidence of Methodius' martyrdom as that given by Jerome.

"Methodius of Olympus"

Methodius' writings themselves offer a little, if only a little, help with details regarding these matters. The manuscripts persistently identify their author as "Methodius of Olympus," though less frequently as "Methodius of Patara," doubtless the source of the des-

[3] F. Diekamp, "Über den Bischofssitz des hl. Märtyrers und Kirchenväters Methodius," *Theologische Quartelschrift* 109 (1928): 285–308, is doubtless still the most comprehensive treatment of the various designations, and contains the specific citations of references other than Jerome omitted here for simplicity's sake. But see the important and more recent review of the evidence in Musurillo, as well as his use of K. Quensell, *Die wahre kirchliche Stellung und Tätigkeit des fälschlich so gennanten Bischofs Methodius von Olympus* (diss., Heidelberg University, 1953), *ACW* 169–73. For Vaillant's useful explanation of the designation of Methodius as Bishop of Philippi, see note 5.

ignations of John of Damascus and Photius. The local allusions in the writings are clearly Lycian. The *Aglaophon* is set in Patera and contains a reference to Mt. Olympus in Lycia. The *Symposium* refers to a conversation between "Methodius" and "the lady of Telmessus" (Τελμησιακή) or more probably of Termessus, a city on the border of Lycia and Pisidia.[4] And one may add, not entirely fancifully, that recurrent references to the sea and mountains suggest a Lycian landscape. That the author's name was Methodius seems clear enough. Even though he appears by that name with certainty only in the reference in the *Symposium* just mentioned, he is mentioned by that name in the Pamphilus-Eusebius *Apologia.* That the locale in which he worked was Olympus is suggested by the fact that the city is nowhere else mentioned as a Christian center at the time; and this may be the reason for the efforts of Jerome and others after him to provide a more suitable location for his episcopacy. In any case, it is as "Methodius of Olympus" that he is generally, and probably correctly, to be identified.[5]

"Bishop and Martyr"

Whether Methodius was a bishop and/or a martyr is a subject worth considering, particularly in view of the lateness and uncertainty of the tradition that designates him as both. The writings we have from him in no case take the form of episcopal utterances of the sort that we have from bishops of his time. They are the writings of a Christian intellectual and teacher in the mold of Clement of Alexandria and Origen, the latter having been ordained a presbyter of the

---

[4] See below, chap. 3, note 5. "Methodius" appears in the Greek excerpts of *De res.* from I.28.1, but without any certainty that it did so originally. On the appearance of the name in the course of *De res.* and the abandonment of the dialogue form in favor of direct address to Origen, see below, chap. 5, note 21.

[5] We owe to Vaillant (*De Autexousio,* 636) the suggestion that the designation "Philippi" in the Slavic translation and in the *Sacra parallela* is owing to an early mistranscription of Olympus. To settle for Philippi, as Diekamp does (see note 3), would in any case be to remove Methodius from the obviously Lycian setting of the writings. Musurillo's suggestion, *ACW,* 169, that Methodius may be as much of a pseudonymn as Eubolius seems too skeptical.

Church of Caesarea in Palestine only after his peculiar eminence had brought him recognition.

Musurillo, who was quite aware of the uncertainty of our evidence, argued that Methodius' relationships with ascetic women may presuppose "episcopal oversight." But this is surely to read back into the third century later assumptions about the relationships of bishops to ascetic communities.[6]

It has also been urged that the various prescriptions of the *Sistelius: On Leprosy (De lepra)* for episcopal excommunication and restoration of sinners show that Methodius had episcopal responsibilities.[7] But while it is true that the specificity of the episcopal discipline there enjoined is intruded into a work that is otherwise substantially dependent on Origen's allegorical treatment of the laws governing the treatment of lepers, it admits of a variety of explanations other than that Methodius was a bishop. We shall see that the *Symposium* repeatedly insists on the importance of baptismal catechesis, over which bishops had oversight, because those committed to "continence" might be expected to regard regular participation in the life of the Church as being less significant than Methodius insists that it should be. But neither concern requires that Methodius be thought a bishop, or a presbyter *(Epiphanius),* or even an episcopally appointed catechist.

The question of whether Methodius died a martyr is also worth examination, and indeed raises the more general question of the dating of his writings in relation to the public events of his time. That it was later assumed that Methodius was both bishop and martyr, in view of his importance, does not in itself mean that he was neither; and Jerome's report of his death "at the end of the latest persecution or, as others report, in the reign of Decius and Valerian," suggests,

---

[6] Musurillo, *ACW,* 169.

[7] See F. van den Paverd, "Confession (Exagoreusis) and Penance (Exomologesis) in the *De lepra* of Methodius of Olympus." I am myself struck by the liturgical allusions to the fast before the Paschal feast (*Symp.* III.12.83) as one among many liturgical references that show a detailed knowledge of Church practice (see below, chap. 3, note 21). But these, too, may well be only those that an informed Christian teacher would know. For further discussion of the references to disciplinary practice in *De lepra,* see Appendix 1, "The *De lepra* among Methodius' Writings."

even in its contradictory details of chronology, that he had some specific reason for saying what he did. However, the reference to the persecution of Decius and Valerian plainly places Methodius too early to allow him to write against Origen, and so it is not surprising that a martyrdom in the persecution of the years after 304 is commonly accepted.

The evidence of the writings themselves is of scant help. It has often been remarked that they make no reference to persecution; indeed, it is reasonable to suppose that the writings come from the period of peace prior to the first of the persecution edicts against Christians at the end of the reign of Diocletian, if not necessarily precisely "at the end" of the persecutions that followed. But it is not quite correct to say that the writings make no reference to persecution: witness the allusion to the martyrdom of Thecla in the *Symposium,* and the celebration of those who have died that is found in the concluding hymn of Thecla. It may be doubted, in any case, that such evidence counts for a great deal. Christian writers of the period do not commonly refer to the persecutions in a specific way, except as circumstances compel them to do so; and this seems particularly true of Clement of Alexandria and Origen, who are closest to Methodius in their concern to discuss the perfection of humanity through the work of Christ, even though they were themselves directly involved in the realities of persecution. To be sure, Origen's *Exhortatio ad martyrium* may be an exception, explained by the specific circumstances that called forth that treatise. On the other hand, Methodius is no less concerned than Clement and Origen to set the Christian life in opposition to that of the world and to stress the abandonment of security that it involves. But the point is perhaps moot: and it may be that we should notice the lack of specific reference to persecution as evidence for placing Methodius' writing in the period to which it seems most likely to belong in any case: after the general availability of the writings of Origen, who perhaps died in 254.[8]

[8] On Methodius' acquaintanceship with Origen's writings, see below, chap. 4. It is perhaps a matter of some interest that we tend to assume the ancient availability of the writings of such a person as Origen in terms of contemporary standards of print-

(footnote continued on next page)

The sole piece of evidence from the writings that suggests Methodius' martyrdom "at the end of the latest persecutions" is a negative one. While the Pamphilus-Eusebius *Apologia* assumes that he is alive, he nowhere subsequently appears on the historical scene, but simply drops from sight. If he was as well known as the reference to him in the *Apologia* suggests, it may well be that he did die as a martyr among the many known Christians who succumbed in the first decade of the fourth century. Eustathius' reference to "Methodius of blessed memory" in the 320s or 330s may be taken to imply a martyr's death.[9]

While there is, then, no prima facie reason to reject the tradition that describes Methodius as "Bishop and Martyr," it must be said that the writings offer little support for his having been either. The suspicion must remain that Jerome and others may simply have assumed that he was both in view of the importance they ascribed to his writings.

The Survival of the Writings

We long had access only to the wreckage of Methodius' writings: the Greek *Symposium* and a collection of Greek fragments, some of considerable length but all difficult to place within a coherent corpus. The achievement of Bonwetsch in correlating the Greek remains with the Slavic translation discovered in the nineteenth century marked the re-creation of a body of writing inaccessible, in anything like its integrity, for centuries. While questions remain about the authen-

(footnote continued from previous page)

ing, mailing, libraries, bookstores, and the like. We might ponder, in the case of Methodius in particular, the questions of how and where he had access to the writings of Origen that he obviously did have, or for that matter access to the many writings of other predecessors whom he obviously knew. It seems probable in the present case, as we will suggest below, that Methodius' principal works, all of which show some familiarity with Origen, should be dated no earlier than the late 250s, and probably between 260 and the end of the century.

[9] Eustathius, *Engast.* XXII. T. D. Barnes' speculations regarding the actual circumstances of Methodius' martyrdom, in "Methodius, Maximus, and Valentinus," *JTS,* n.s., 37 (1979): 353–68, later developed in graphic fashion by Peter Brown, in *Body and Society,* 188, may just possibly be correct. But Methodius' departure from the scene is the fundamental fact to be reckoned with.

ticity of parts of both the Greek and the Slavic collections, they are of minor importance in comparison to the achievement as a whole.[10] While the Greek Methodius remains the "real" Methodius for purposes of close analysis, the Slavic translation allows the Greek to be read in the context of something like the body of the writings of which they were part.

A detailed discussion of the survival and transmission of the writings, even if such were possible, is beyond the scope of this work. But we may briefly notice the evidence they provide of the importance assigned to Methodius by his successors, and thus of their place in the evolving tradition regarding Methodius himself.

The obvious starting point is once again Eusebius of Caesarea, whose preservation of an excerpt from our *De libero arbitrio* as the work of "Maximus" has already been mentioned and will be considered in detail in the next chapter.[11] Eusebius' uncertainty about the authorship of the excerpt is compounded rather than clarified by its inclusion, for reasons that remain unclear, in the *Philocalia Origenis* XXIV as a fragment of authentic work by Origen himself on the subject "that matter is not uncreated or the cause of evil." To complicate the problem further, excerpts of the *De libero arbitrio* and of the *Aglaophon (De resurrectione)* were incorporated in the *Dialogue of Adamantius,* itself also attributed to Origen, and so regarded by Rufinus in his Latin translation of the work. The *Adamantius* is in many respects a puzzlng work, which we will touch on later, chiefly in considering the implications of the attribution of the Eusebian excerpt to Origen.[12] For our present purposes, it is sufficient to note

[10] See Buchheit, *Studien,* 120ff., on the authenticity of the Greek fragments *Contra Porphyrium.* The Slavic translation of a work *De vita,* included in Bonwetsch but regarded by him as inauthentic (*GCS,* xxxvii), urges the acceptance of the diminishment of worldly goods as something attributable to Divine Providence in a fashion without parallel in the recognized works of Methodius. Though Farges regarded Bonwetsch's view as inconclusive (*Idées,* 22), the work contributes little to the study of the main themes of Methodius' thought.

[11] See Introduction, note 17.

[12] On the *Adamantius* itself, see W. H. van de Sande Bakhuysen, *GCS* 4 (1901), ix et seq. That the work may be seen as coming from a person or persons who believed that Methodius had plagiarized Origen (Vaillant, *De Autexousio,* 638), or alternatively

(footnote continued on next page)

that, even in the latter part of the fourth century, the authorshipand purpose—of more than one of Methodius' writings remained unclear.

At the same time, however, evidence of a degree of clarity begins to appear. As already mentioned, Eustathius, in the early decades of the fourth century, knew of Methodius as a critic of Origen. A bit later, Gregory of Nyssa knew that the *Aglaophon* was written against Origen. And so, too, did Epiphanius, who, as already mentioned, gives excerpts of both the *De libero arbitrio* and the *Aglaophon* in his *Panarion* as coming from works written by Methodius against Origen. Jerome, in his aforementioned list of Methodius' writings (*De viris illustrisibus* LXIII), mentions the work "on the free will" as written against Origen. By the time of Photius, who is familiar with the *De libero arbitrio,* the *Symposium,* and the *Aglaophon,* as well as the otherwise neglected *Xeno,* it is clear that a substantial body of Methodius' writings was available for reading, and regarded as the work of a critic of Origen.

The neglect of the *Xeno,* other than by Photius, also suggests that, by this time, certain problems had arisen with regard to the relation of Methodius' criticism of Origen on the eternal creation of the cosmos and the views of Arius. Indeed, we shall suggest that Photius may have excerpted the *Xeno* in such a way as to underplay possible similarities between Methodius' criticism of Origen on the eternal creation of the cosmos and Arius' attack on the eternal begetting of the Son. Moreover, Photius says that Arian interpolations, unspe-

(footnote continued from previous page)

from a "school of Methodius" presumably intent on preserving the unity of his writings, is of little help in explaining either the character of the work itself or its use by such diverse people as Rufinus and Epiphanius. The suggestion of T. D. Barnes (see above, note 9), to take our *De lib. arbit.* as a digest of the *Adamanatius* rather than the other way around, has not to my knowledge received support. The crucial fact that neither Eusebius nor the collectors of the *Philocalia,* nor yet the author or authors of the *Adamantius,* regarded *De lib. arbit.* as written against Origen will be taken up in chap. 2. Moreover, the fact that sections of the *Aglaophon* included in the *Adamantius* do not contain explicit criticism of Origen may just posssibly have some bearing on the notion that the *Aglaophon* did not initially implicate Origen is a point that will be taken into account in chap. 5. These are not unimportant considerations, but they do not bear on the present subject.

cified by him, are to be found in the *Symposium.*[13] By Photius' time, Methodius has become a significant orthodox figure whose views could not be allowed to be tinged with incipient Arianism: the theological discussions of the later third century had been buried under the weight of the controversy of the fourth century.[14]

The Slavic Methodius

There is no question of the value of the Slavic translation for the reconstruction of the Methodian corpus. Without it, the scope and character of the *De libero arbitrio,* the *Sistelius,* and the *Aglaophon* would be lost to us, and in the last case in particular the structure of the work and much of the actual argumentation against Origen would be misunderstood. Moreover, the translation supplies our only access to the two letter-treatises, *De sanguisuga* and *De cibis,* which, despite their lugubrious titles—so lacking in the elegance that Methodius himself sought to affect—contain all-important evidence concerning the chronology of the writing, and thus contribute to our ability to study the development of his thought.[15]

Looked at in itself, however, the Slavic translation presents us with a Methodius of its own. It omits the *Symposium,* the only work

---

[13] Musurillo accepts the existence of an Arian revision of the *Symp.* (*ACW*, 28ff.; cf. *SC*. 35ff.). But it is not clear to me that such a revision, if indeed it existed at all, has anything to do with the present text of the *Symp.* except perhaps for certain passages in Discourse 9 that we will discuss below in chap. 4. The question of the Photian fragments of the *Xeno* is a far more complicated one. That the work is not present in the Slavic translation may suggest that it was regarded as dubiously orthodox. Photius' caution about treating Methodius on the coming to be of the Word is discussed in chap. 6.

[14] It is in this connection that the later and spurious *De ramis palmarum* and *De Simeone et Anna* were probably attributed to Methodius in order to make his views on the relation of the persons of the Godhead and the two natures of the Son conform to orthodox teaching on these matters.

[15] Bonwetsch does no more than list the constituent elements of the Slavic translation in *GCS*, 37–38, but he does take some account of its characteristics in the course of his *Theologie.* But see Vaillant, *De Autexousio,* 660–723, for comments on the provenance, character, and significance of the translation. At the present time, thanks to Vaillant's edition of that work, and Musurillo's editing of *Symp.* (see Introduction, note 2), a proper edition of the Slavic *De res.* would be the inevitable next step in the study of the Methodian texts.

to survive in its Greek entirety, substituting for it the Pseudo-Basil *De virginitate.* It also omits the *Xeno,* if indeed it knows of it. In effect, it thus lacks the two writings that we have reason to suppose were in some fashion regarded as of dubious orthodoxy. But it adds the almost certainly spurious *De vita,* with its general counsel on facing the loss of material goods and the transitory character of human existence. It thus presents the reader with an orthodox Methodius, defending the goodness of creation against its detractors, teaching human responsibility for evil, and urging the leading of a Christian life characterized by acceptance of the ascetic ideal, repentance for sins, and serenity among the difficulties of the human condition. We may suspect that this was the Methodius that seemed valuable in circumstances where general teaching on the Christian life was of paramount interest.

The Remnant Greek Methodius

The Methodius remembered in the Greek-speaking world was quite different, and served a different function. The survival of the *Symposium* alone in its entirety suggests that the more subtle ascetic teaching of that work commanded attention. The rest of the writings, however, were consigned to collections of sayings and the works of "heresiologists." Presumably, the particular emphases of the *Symposium,* reflective of the theological and ascetical context in which it was written, were forgotten, while its general teaching and subtle style remained of interest. But the great theological writings of Athanasius, the Cappadocians, Cyril of Alexandria, John Chrysostom, and John of Damascus, among others, preempted theological attention. The difference between the Slavic and the Greek Methodius reflects the different circumstances and clienteles of the Danube Valley and the imperial capital.

A brief notice of the history of the survival of the writings tells us a good deal about the place of Methodius and his writings in subsequent theological history. But it tells us little about the Lycian writer himself. Perhaps this is the case with any figure whose work is preserved by his successors for reasons of their own. In Methodius' case, it means that it is necessary to begin afresh, from evidence all

along preserved in the writings themselves, to discover something more substantial about their author.

The Evidence of the Writings

The evidence of the writings is, in the first instance, evidence of their chronological order as it may be deduced beginning with the two letter-treatises, *De sanguisuga* and *De cibis*. This evidence has not gone entirely unnoticed. Equally important, however, and generally neglected, are the clues to Methodius' emergence as a critic of Origen, as these two works allow us to let it unfold by a study of the writings to which they refer. Indeed, these two works open the way to our answering broader questions about the development of Methodius' theological views. We have already referred to the sole-surviving contemporary reference to Methodius, in the Pamphilus-Eusebius *Apologia,* reported by Jerome (*Contra Rufinum* I.11) as showing that Methodius was regarded at Caesarea in the early years of the fourth century as a "turncoat" Origenist. "How," it asks, "can Methodius now dare to criticize Origen, when he has so often shown himself dependent on his teaching?"[16] It is to precisely this question, among others, that Methodius' letters help us to provide answers.

De sanguisuga

We may begin, then, with the specific references to the chronology of the writings found in the *De sanguisuga* X.1–4. Here Methodius acknowledges to his correspondent, Eustachius, that he has neglected to treat one of the scriptural passages on which he had been asked to comment, the verse from Wisdom 7:1–2: ("I am a mortal man, born of the earth, and the offspring of him who was first made of the earth, and was fashioned in my mother's womb to be flesh . . . compacted in blood, of the seed of man and the pleasure that comes

[16] There is little reason to doubt the accuracy of Jerome's report, though it is the evidence of the letter-treatises that reveals the circumstances to which it refers. The Latin (*PL* XXIII, 405B) has *quomodo ausus est Methodius nunc contra Origenem scribere, qui haec et haec de Origenis locutus est dogmatibus.*

from sleep." After a brief disclaimer that Solomon here has Christ in view, he says that he intends to take up the text in his work "on the body." And this text is indeed dealt with, though in no great detail, at our *Aglaophon* I.26, to the point in question.

At the very least, then, we know that this letter was written before the *Aglaophon,* to which it obviously refers as a projected work; and we will eventually note that it contains other anticipations of the future *Aglaophon* as well.[17] But one important argument of *De sanguisuga* suggests that the issues treated in our present *Aglaophon* are not yet in the writer's view. Thus, in defending the search for the spiritual meaning of the Scriptures—before treating the passage on the water-leech, which attaches itself to the throat and inhibits speech (Prv. 30:5) as referring to the passions that disrupt the body and forestall rational thought—Methodius argues that some scriptural passages have no literal meaning, and cites (II.3) in this connection the conversation among the trees in Jotham's fable (Jgs. 9:8–15). He thus embraces a principle that he apparently continues to accept in the *Symposium* (X.2), where Jotham's fable is treated on the same assumption. But this is a principle that he rejects in the *Aglaophon* (111. 8.3) on the ground that *all* Scriptures have both a literal and a spiritual meaning. As we shall see, this is only one of a variety of reasons for thinking that the present *Aglaophon* contains clarifications, if not corrections, of views that Methodius had earlier held.

De cibis

The reference to the chronology of the writings in the *De cibis* is far more significant than that in the *De sanguisuga.* Here Methodius (I.1–2) begins by apologizing to his women correspondents—at first a certain Phrenope and later a certain Kilonia—for his delay in replying to their request for interpretations of scriptural passages. These persons know, he says, "how many sorrows Satan prepared for me after the completion of the banquet of the virgins, and further [be-

[17] Certain other features of the *De sang.* that appear in the treatment of the resurrection in the later work, and thus show that Methodius' later teaching is already anticipated in more than a general way, will be noticed in chapter 5.

cause of my] not being able to complete the work on the resurrection." However, he continues (I.3–4), he will not cease to write, since from the time of the prophets the demons "have tried to turn human beings away from their creator and the firstborn and only-begotten Son Jesus Christ" by causing hatred against those who "pursue the study of the Scriptures that lead to the perfection of the soul."

The bearing of this passage on the chronology of the writings is clear enough. *De cibis* was written subsequent to the completion of the *Symposium,* and at some unspecified point in the writing of the *Aglaophon* as we now have it. But the letter tells us a good deal more. In its rambling and highly personal way, it refers to criticism of the *Symposium,* and at least suggests that this criticism will be alleviated by completion of the work "on the resurrection," whose delay is unexplained.[18]

De cibis on the Resurrection of Bodies

De cibis, as it continues, tells us much more about the criticism of the *Symposium* and the purpose of the *Aglaophon.* Indeed, in the body of the letter we are presented not merely with an interpretation of the scriptural passage regarding the purification of those who touch dead bodies (Nm. 19:11–13), which would seem to be the passage on which his views were desired, but upon the entire scriptural chapter of which it is a part. This chapter, Methodius suggests, not only requires spiritual interpretation, but is intelligible only in the light of belief in the bodily resurrection.

Moreover, not only the principal passage from Numbers but all the other scriptural passages that Methodius introduces in the course of his remarks are, in some fashion, related to passages discussed in the *Symposium* itself. The letter thus seems to be dealing either with questions that have arisen in the minds of Methodius' correspondents

[18] Vaillant, *De Autexousio,* 652, takes this passage of *De cibis* as suggesting that some form of the work "on the resurrection" has been the subject of criticism, perhaps for its treatment of Origen, and refers to the Pamphilus-Eusebius *Apologia* in this connection. But this view assumes more about the present state of the work "on the resurrection" than we can read out of the passage, and fails to take account of the further evidence of the *De cibis,* which suggests that it is the use of allegorical interpretation and the treatment of the resurrection in the *Symp.* that are the matters at issue between Methodius and his critics.

as a result of their reading of that work, or with questions that Methodius himself assumes might be discussed in relation to it. We shall notice the connections, often quite indirect, with the *Symposium* in what follows. But this peculiar circumstance suggests that *De cibis* is far more closely related to the criticism of the *Symposium* than has hitherto been noticed. Methodius is already concerned here to reply in some detail to questions raised about his view of the resurrection of bodies.[19]

Thus, Methodius prefaces his comments on Leviticus with a lengthy explanation of the importance of discovering the spiritual meaning of the Law (6.3–8), making the point that such provisions of the Law have been abrogated for those who have been baptized into Christ (7.1–7). Here he bases his remarks on Hebrews 10:1: "The Law has a shadow of the good things to come"—a passage familiar to readers of Origen and used by Methodius himself in the *Symposium* (V.7, IX.1–4). In this connection, he refers to the distinctions of pure and impure foods (Lv. 1 :3ff.; Dt. 14:6ff.), which give the letter its primary title. Such prescriptions as not eating animals with cloven hooves but eating those that chew the cud were given for the education of Israel in obedience, but now teach us about the necessity of emancipating the soul from the passions and the importance of the study of the Scriptures (8. 1–2). In an elaborate interpretation of the "ivory palaces" (Ps. 44:8) that are constructed from legally unclean animals, he now adds that this text is to be taken spiritually, since evil does not belong to the body, "with which God is well-pleased, anticipating [its] sinlessness at the resurrection" (8.4–7). The problem of the "ivory palaces," it should be noted, is one that might arise in the fertile mind of a reader of *Symposium* VII.3, with its reference to the inhabitants of the palace of the king (Sg. 6:8).

Still short of the passage to which he is headed, Methodius comments on the subject of purification by reference to the sacrifice of

[19] See my "Notes on *De cibis* and Methodius' View of Origen," in R. Hanson and H. Crouzel, eds., *Origeniana Tertia* (Rome: Editioni Dell'Ateneo), 233–43, for a discussion of the letter-treatise in greater detail. The point about the relation of the passages dealt with to questions that might be raised by reading the *Symp.* had, however, not then occurred to me. See below, chap. 3, note 25.

the heifer in the opening verses of Numbers 19. In various ways, this passage is made to refer to the effects of the sacrifice of Christ on those baptized in the triune name; and Methodius here again strikes the note that the death of Christ, who came in our flesh, did so "in order to lead the flesh into eternal life" (12:6–8). Again, the issue of the heifer may arise out of reflection on the treatment of Numbers 6:21 at *Symposium* V.1, which has to do with keeping the flesh pure in preparation for its final perfection.

Finally, with regard to the passage about touching dead bodies, and the related prescriptions against entering the tent in which death has occurred, and of the purification of those who have done so, Methodius takes the Scriptures to refer to the spiritual death of the soul "which makes the tent of virtue unclean." The passage, he says, teaches the importance of the purification of repentance and the cultivation of good works required by those who associate themselves with evil. Literal association with dead bodies does not render the soul impure; nor need we fear touching dead bodies as if we feared death, since the dead are free from sin. And he adds that if the body were not pure, "the Lord would not raise it up and make it worthy of the kingdom of God" (13:1–5).

The question of touching dead bodies may be suggested once again by the passage from Numbers as it is treated in *Symposium* V.1. Plainly, however, it has a wider bearing on the question of the ambiguous character of embodied existence as dealt with throughout the *Symposium.* As this may be, these bits of interpretation on the theme of the purification of the baptized, as well as the passages earlier treated, shed a good deal more light on the relation of the *Symposium* to the *Aglaophon* than is commonly recognized. They certainly suggest that questions raised regarding allegorical interpretation of the Scriptures and rejection of the resurrection of bodies are associated in Methodius' mind with the criticism of the *Symposium* which he hopes will be laid to rest by his book "on the resurrection."

De cibis and the Criticism of Origen

Whether such criticism is associated with a charge that Methodius has been excessively influenced by Origen is not—to be careful about

the matter—at all clear. But we shall see, in looking at the contents of the *Symposium,* and in particular at the points at which its teaching is clarified, or corrected, in the *Aglaophon,* that there can be little doubt that Methodius' association with Origen lies at the root of the problem, and contributes to his efforts to distance himself from Origen in the *Aglaophon* as we now have it. If this is the case, there can be no doubt that Methodius *does* here answer the question of the Pamphilus-Eusebius *Apologia* as to how he now dares to attack Origen when he is so indebted to him. In Methodius' view, as we shall see, he is no "turncoat" Origenist, but rather someone who has come to understand that Origen himself strayed from orthodox teaching regarding embodied existence, particularly on points on which he had himself depended on Origen's scriptural interpretations in his earlier work.

This analysis of the problem requires more careful development than can yet be given it. For the moment, however, it can be said that the evidence of the letter-treatises not only establishes the chronological relations of several of Methodius' major works, and opens important avenues for consideration of his emergence as a critic of Origen, but indicates the lines along which his own thought will develop in the course of that criticism.

De libero arbitrio

A rather different sort of evidence, bearing on both the chronology of the writings and the development of Methodius' thought, is provided by the dialogue we now call *De libero arbitrio.* An excerpt from this dialogue, as we have already seen, was attributed by Eusebius of Caesarea to "Maximus" and subsequently attributed by the editors of the *Philocalia Origenis* to Origen himself. By something like "common consent," this work has always been regarded as being among the earliest of Methodius' writings; and the evidence we shall eventually adduce suggests, at the very least, that it is earlier than the *Symposium.* As we shall see, the latter contains a variety of arguments that are hard to explain except as being summaries of arguments of an earlier work, rather than anticipations of those of a later work. The *De libero arbitrio* is, in any case, a dialogue, perhaps originally titled

Maximus with a subtitle having to do with God, matter, and the free will. It develops arguments against a cosmological dualism of spirit and matter, rather than human self-determination (σιον), as the cause of evil.

The significance of the work, for our present purposes, consists in the fact that, while neither Eusebius nor the editors of the *Philocalia*—nor, of course, that of the *Dialogue of Adamantius*—regard it as the work against Origen that Jerome is the first among our sources to do, it contains arguments that are repeated in both the *Aglaophon* and the *Xeno,* and by both the heretical and the orthodox speakers in these works. In short, the criticism of Origen in these works is one that assumes that the Alexandrian has been led, however inconsistently, to accept a cosmological dualism, with its implications regarding the origin of evil, in his views of the spiritual resurrection and the eternal creation of the cosmos.

It is therefore understandable that the *De libero arbitrio* has commonly been regarded, implicitly or covertly, as critical of Origen. A good deal of bemusement has, in fact, resulted from attempts to show just where this criticism is to be found in a work that concerns issues seen to arise from aspects of the influence of Greek philosophy which Origen himself opposed.[20] Perhaps there has been no more puzzling problem in the treatment of Methodius' writings than this.

The solution to this puzzle proposed here is a simple one, though it will involve a good deal of argument in its development. We suggest that Methodius came to assume, most probably in the course of the composition of his work "on the resurrection," that Origen had come to accept the view of the origin of evil that Methodius had himself opposed in his early dialogue. Thus, while the *Aglaophon* itself reviews issues regarding embodied existence in the light of the earlier work, Origen came finally to be included among those subjected to criticism on these grounds, and in fact was misrepresented as a result. Such a view of Origen, however, did not, we shall suggest, either

[20] Recent interpretations of the purpose of the *De lib. arbit.* and particularly of the possibility of its containing covert criticism of Origen, will be discussed in chapter 2. See also chap. 5, note 40, and chap. 6, note 29.

diminish Methodius' indebtedness to him, or place him beyond consideration. On the contrary, it made Origen, as a "man of the Church," the person whose views required the most specific consideration, even though, and perhaps just because, Methodius had come to regard them as unacceptable.[21]

Conclusion and Anticipation

The evidence of the writings, or at least of the letter-treatises and the *De libero arbitrio* as thus far presented, does not resolve the questions raised by an examination of the tradition regarding "Methodius, Bishop and Martyr." He may have been both, one, or neither; if the last is true, he surely owed his posthumous "promotions" to his growing reputation as a critic of Origen and an exponent of Christian asceticism. In any case, the evidence of the writings places Methodius, as a Christian teacher, squarely in the theological world of the later third century. It thus opens the way to examining his writings as those of a person whose thought took shape in that world, and evolved in response to the criticism of his writings on the actual theological issues that concerned him most. It may be suggested that, in contrast to the tradition about Methodius, the evidence of the writings tells us more than we commonly know about the personal circumstances of many other Greek theological figures of the time.

Further examination of the writings themselves will fill out, but not substantially alter, this picture. That Methodius became a critic of Origen is certain, though the precise sense in which he regarded himself as such remains to be discussed. That he was more than simply a critic is nevertheless clear. In his exposition of Christianity against the claims of the philosophical tradition, in his promotion of chastity as the appropriate form of Christian life, and in his treatment of the stages of the plan of God for human salvation, which he sets against the philosophical tradition and sees as now culminating in that call, Methodius develops inherited themes in ways very much

[21] Once again, we simply anticipate views that will be developed in more detail in subsequent chapters.

his own. In the course of his criticism of Origen, as we shall see, the aspects of his thought to which we have already directed attention undergo elaboration in ways that deserve particular notice. His insistence on the ultimate sovereignty of God against all forms of cosmological dualism, on human freedom as the source of the evil against which God has taken steps to contend, and on the life in Christ as opening the way to a perfection beyond knowing, will, in these circumstances, be reworked in terms that shed important light on the theological directions of his time quite apart from the influence of the misrepresentations—or misinterpretations—of Origen for which he was responsible.

2—
De libero arbitrio:
Dualism and the Problem of Evil

To turn first to the dialogue commonly referred to as the *De libero arbitrio,* rather than to the more familiar ascetical discourses of the *Symposium,* is to embark on the study of a less comprehensive and perhaps a less engaging work. It is also to encounter a variety of problems that have preoccupied interpreters from an early date. We shall see, however, that the dialogue has much of importance to tell us about the whole of Methodius' writings.

As now reconstructed in something like its entirety, with the Slavic translation serving as a framework within which to set the extensive Greek remains, the work stands as the most complete of Methodius' writings other than the *Symposium.* In genre it is a dialogue on the Platonic model,[1] though its purpose is to expose the inadequacy of a cosmological dualism of spirit and matter as an explanation of evil—with contemporary interpretations of the myth of the *Timaeus* clearly in mind—and to argue the contrary view that the characteristic of human self-determination (τὸ αὐτεξούσιον), badly rendered in Latin as *liberum arbitrium,* is the cause of the evils that beset humanity. Though not lacking in passion when describing the contrast

[1] See below, note 12. The reassembled text used here is that of Vaillant, *De Autexousio,* though chapter and paragraph references conform to the more commonly used divisions of Bonwetsch.

between the destructive blandishments of philosophy and the harmonious truth of the Gospel, it presents itself as a rational discussion among speakers who honor opposing views and regard one another as intellectual equals. A review of Methodius' sources will show both his familiarity and his agreement with the tradition of Christian writings that assumes that such a cosmological dualism underlies gnostic Christian teaching; but important features of the work suggest that Methodius has specifically in view the teaching of Hermogenes, the somewhat obscure philosophical figure of the second century, commonly but nowhere precisely or specifically associated with the school of Valentinus.[2] In fact, despite efforts from an early date to make it do so, Methodius' work does not in fact present itself as dealing explicitly with the views of any major gnostic teacher.[3]

In short, the dialogue presents Methodius as we have already described him, as an independent Christian teacher concerned to expound Christian faith in contrast to philosophical teachings which he regards as attractive but deceptive. The various later views of the

[2] On the terminology of "free will" and τὸ αὐτεξούσιον in its several forms, see below, note 31. Hermogenes is known to us only through the extended criticism of his views in Tertullian, *Adv. Hermog.,* and through the brief account of his teaching in Hippolytus, *Haer.* VIII.10. Eusebius (*HE* III.24.14) reports that Theophilus of Antioch composed a work *Adv. Hermogenem* (cf. Jerome, *De vir. illus.* XXV). The problem of Methodius' knowledge of Hermogenes, or of his critics, will be with us in the course of our treatment of *De lib. arbit.* (*see* below, notes 15, 19, 32), as well as of the *De res.,* which repeats arguments from this work together with others found in the works of Tertullian. Little help is to be had from Theophilus, *Ad Aut.,* which contains none of the special features that mark the treatment of Hermogenes in Tertullian's treatise or in the account of Hippolytus.

[3] Methodius is certainly not unconcerned with "heresies"; witness his references in *De lepra* XI.3 to those who are "leprous in spirit," and more specifically in VII.5 to unspecified "heretics who blaspheme against the Father, the pretemporal Word, and the Holy Spirit," a description too general to be of help. At II.5 he alludes also to a Marcionite view of a plurality of souls. But while it is certainly true that *De lib. arbit.* stands in the tradition of Irenaeus and others, which sees a cosmological dualism as underlying gnostic speculations, it seems clear that specific forms of gnostic teaching are not at issue in the work, nor are the opponents of the dialogue to be identified with any specific body of gnostic teaching. Their designation as Valentinians in the *Adamantius* notwithstanding, Vaillant's careful review of the evidence, in *De Autexousio,* 639, 649, is convincing on the point that the speakers are best identified simply as "heretics" and "orthodox."

dialogue, which see it not only as a criticism of gnostic teaching but also as a work containing implicit or covert criticisms of Origen, will be discussed later in this chapter. Our main purpose is to consider the work as it presents itself, to attempt to establish more concretely the character and substance of its arguments, and especially to suggest that it is far from being the rather sterile reiteration of earlier issues that it has too often been taken to be.[4]

We should acknowledge at the outset that the *De libero arbitrio* presents two problems that apparently perplexed ancient readers no less than modern ones. The first concerns the title of the work and its bearing on its character and purpose. The second, doubtless more important, problem has to do with the fact that basic arguments against a cosmological dualism developed in it, particularly the major contention that evil is caused by human freedom rather than by involvement with an evil matter, are later embraced in significant detail by speakers who oppose the views of Origen in the *Aglaophon* and the *Xeno*.

With regard to the second problem, which we must leave aside for the present, we have already anticipated our solution in a general way: namely, that Methodius only subsequently came to believe that Origen's speculations on human embodiment, and on the eternal creation of the cosmos, reflected acceptance of views similar to those attributed to the opponents in his *De libero arbitrio*. But it remains the view of recent commentators, although commonly advanced with some hesitation, that this work is at least covertly critical of Origen.[5]

---

[4] Vaillant takes the view that "l'allure du dialogue est assez nettement inactuelle et anachronique: à la fin du IIIe siècle, la mode était passée des discussions academiques avec les paienes" (*De Auexousio,* 647), and suggests that this may be a reason for Eusebius placing the person he called "Maximus" among writers of the late second century (648). However, Vaillant himself frequently—and perhaps unwarily—cites similarities between views of Methodius and Plotinus in rejection of a cosmological dualism (641–43). Among those who have, on the contrary, recognized Methodius' importance as a source for the treatment of third-century issues, and that particularly in regard to his treatment of human freedom, see G. C. Stead, *Philosophy in Christian Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 89.

[5] See, for example, Vaillant, *De Autexousio,* 649–50. On the contrary, Farges (*Idées,* 102–4), though he assumes that the work is written against the Valentinians,

(footnote continued on next page)

The Title

The first problem, namely, that of the title of the work, has a bearing not only on its dialogical character and purpose, but also on the history of its transmission and interpretation.

As already discussed, in a different connection in the previous chapter,[6] there is good reason to suppose that the work was originally a dialogue entitled *Maximus,* with a subtitle specifying its particular subject as being, in some combination, God, matter, and free will.[7] On this view, the work carried a title similar to that of the *Sistelius: On Leprosy,* the *Aglaophon: On the Resurrection,* and the *Xeno: On Created Things.*[8] It is for this reason, so the argument runs, that Eusebius, who preserved the excerpt of the work later included in the *Philocalia Origenis,* identified it as the work of a late-second-century "Maximus" to whom he referred in his *Historia ecclesiastica.*[9] This view, originally advanced by Zahn and accepted by Robinson,[10] has won general approval despite its being questioned by Vaillant. For Vaillant, Eusebius' error would be compounded were *Maximus* the title, since the protagonists from which the other dialogues take their titles are the heterodox speakers.

We have here resisted the temptation to use the title *Maximus,* chiefly because there is no manuscript evidence to support it. It should be noted, however, that the weakness of Vaillant's objection to doing so lies in the fact that "Sistelius" in the dialogue *Sistelius: On Leprosy* is not a heterodox but an inquiring Christian believer.[11]

(footnote continued from previous page)

is more concerned to notice its correspondences with the views of Origen of the sort we will stress.

[6] See chap. 1, note 2.

[7] The subtitle appears in Eusebius' reference to the work as "on the origin of evil and that matter had a beginning," and in the *Philoc.* "on matter, that it is not uncreated." It is in Jerome that it appears as *De libero arbitrio* and in Photius as τοῦ αὐτεξούσιου.

[8] The title *Xeno: On Created Things* appears in Socrates, *HE* VI.13.

[9] See above, note 4, on Vaillant's estimate of the significance of Eusebius' placing "Maximus" where he does.

[10] See chap. 1, note 2.

[11] See Vaillant, *De Autexousio,* 630, where he observes that Eusebius' error of

(footnote continued on next page)

Whatever the original title of the work, it is important to bear in mind that it is a dialogue similar in genre to Methodius' other writings. It is quite particularly not a "treatise" or extended disquisition, as was tacitly assumed when portions of its arguments were excerpted—as was indeed the case from an early date—as reflecting the views of the author of a theological treatise. Such force as the work possesses, as well as its style of argument, its nature, and its purpose, can only be grasped when its dialogical character is kept in mind. This point will become even clearer when we eventually consider the reiteration of arguments drawn from the dialogue by speakers in the later *Aglaophon* and *Xeno,* who are too frequently thought of as expounding views that Methodius regards as coming from Origen or propounds himself, rather than engaging in dialogical exchanges on subjects of contemporary philosophical and theological importance. Whatever other reasons there may be for our approaching the *De libero arbitrio* first among Methodius' major writings, its character as an exercise in dialogical composition is important for its bearing on the reading of the corpus as a whole.

The Structure of the Dialogue

The *De libero arbitrio* is structured as a discussion between a principal heterodox protagonist (called "Maximus" in the view of Zahn and Robinson), an orthodox speaker, and the latter's companion (IV.4), who assumes the role of a second heterodox protagonist as the discussion unfolds. The speakers are variously identified in the excerpts from which the work is reconstructed, but may best be identified simply as "heretics" and "orthodox." In none of the excerpts does Methodius introduce himself, as he does in the *Sistelius,* the *Symposium,* and the *Aglaophon,* under the cognomen of "Eubolius."

(footnote continued from previous page)

identification would be "grossière" if the Maximus whom he includes among Christian writers were in fact the principal opponent of orthodox teaching in a dialogue that was not written by a person of that name. Despite Vaillant's overlooking of the fact that "Sistelius" is not a heretic, the Slavic translation does not refer to *Maximus* as it does to *Sistelius* and *Aglaophon,* and as one would expect to be the case if the translator had the text in the fullness that he did.

The use of the general scheme of the Platonic *Protagoras,* as well as similarities of language to that dialogue and to the *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus* in particular among the Platonic dialogues, is easily recognized.[12] In the end, however, the myth of the *Timaeus,* or at least issues relating to its third-century interpretation, is revealed to have been the main concern throughout the work.

The Prefatory Exhortation

Before the beginning of the dialogue itself stands a prefatory exhortation to its readers (I.1–9), frequently dismissed as a mere rhetorical exercise but actually significant for understanding the purpose of the work. This exhortation opens by contrasting the deadly Sirens' song of the Greeks, which leads its hearers to destruction (*Odyssey* XII.158ff.), and the chorus of the prophets, for which one need not bind oneself or stop one's ears in fear. It then issues a call to hear this chorus without fear, adding that, when united with the choir of the apostles, it produces the harmony of the mysteries of God. The purpose of the work, Methodius adds, is to raise this life-giving hymn "to the Father, glorifying Jesus through the Spirit" in the company of those who "like a flowering meadow" rejoice to unite in hearing and singing the divine mysteries.

It has not escaped notice that the contrast between the Sirens' song of the Greeks and the chorus of the prophets repeats the striking figure used by Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus* IX.12, with its implication that Christianity rather than Greek philosophy is the way to life. And indeed it should be noted that the same figure recurs in Methodius' other writings, at *Symposium* VIII.1 and *Aglaophon* I.28.1. It is one of many evidences of Methodius' use of Clement throughout his works.[13]

[12] See the apparatus of the Bonwetsch edition. Note will be taken later of the similarity between the basic scheme of *De lib. arbit.* and that of the *Aglaophon,* where the companion of the orthodox speaker again becomes the second protagonist.

[13] See Bonwetsch's apparatus, and especially Vaillant, *De Autexousio,* 641 where it is argued, for reasons I do not understand, that the repetition of the figure against the views of the opponents in *De res.* is among the minor bits of evidence suggesting that *De lib. arbit.* is covertly written against Origen. The theme of the

(footnote continued on next page)

The exhortation deserves consideration in its own right. The careful elaboration of the reference to the chorus of the prophets, in parallel with the choir of the apostles, both of which together provide the harmonious hymn of the divine mysteries, implies more than is actually said regarding Methodius' principles of scriptural interpretation. Following both Clement and Origen—and of course Irenaeus as well—Methodius assumes that it is the consistency of the teaching of the prophets and the apostles that is the ground of the Christian understanding of the Scriptures. This careful elaboration of Clement's figure reflects a precision with regard to scriptural interpretation that is evidently in his mind in all of his writings. At the same time, Methodius' reference to his readers as a community of students of the Scriptures—whose description as a "flowering meadow" anticipates the pictorial setting of the celebration of chastity in the *Symposium*—suggests that some sort of school of Christian study, whether in reality or expectation, is the public for which the work is intended.

In short, the exhortation sets the subject of the work within the context of a conflict which Methodius thinks to exist between the basic assumptions of Christianity and Greek philosophy. He regards his task, in his relations with those with whom he sees himself associated as a teacher, as making clear what is at stake in this conflict. He assumes an intellectual audience, and just perhaps—in view of the use of Clement's figure and its relation to the latter's analysis of gnostic teaching—an audience that is likely to be attracted to gnostic teaching, though this is not explicitly stated.

The Opening and Initial Exchanges

An equally unusual feature of the work is the abrupt opening of the dialogical exchanges with a vivid personal account by the principal protagonist of the circumstances that led him to the conviction that the evils besetting human life can best be explained by reference to a cosmological dualism of God and matter (II–III).

(footnote continued from previous page)

"melody" of the Scriptures is, of course, not peculiar to either Methodius or to Clement, and appears in Irenaeus, *AH* II.28.3; cf. Origen, *In Mt.* II, cf. *Philoc.* VI. But the similarity with Clement in opposing the chorus of the Scriptures to the Sirens' song is too obvious to be missed.

On the previous day, he recalls, he was alone on the seashore, appalled by the anger of the incoming waves, and reminded of its description in Homer (*Iliad* IX.4), which he recites. Yet the waves broke and were pacified as if obeying some higher power intent on controlling them. Moreover, as the sun fell and the moon rose, he was led to reflect on the celestial order whose revolutions control the universe, and which he thinks is justly called divine. Reflecting on what he had seen (II.9), he says, he debated with himself whence evils come, "whether from something always existing with God, or from God alone [ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων]."

On the present day itself, however, he encountered two human beings abusing one another, and then called to mind varieties of human abuse, such as murder, theft, rape, and adultery, all of which reminded him of the accounts of human inhumanity in the tragic drama. Being led to inquire once again "whence [evils] arise, and what is their origin, and who is their author" (III.6), and being unwilling to attribute them to God, he concluded that, among the possibilities he had earlier considered, it is more likely that there "coexists with God something called matter [φερομένης]," and which God ordered insofar as possible, but from the chaotic residue of which arise the evils that beset human life (III.9).

The protagonist now expresses his desire to hear whether his conclusion is wrong and the dialogue proper begins. The orthodox speaker, who admits that others have concluded like things, agrees to engage in a friendly discussion which, he hopes, will include his own companion, whom he believes shares the same views as those just expressed (IV.1–4).

This opening account of the chief protagonist is of some interest in itself as an example of Methodius' flair for vivid descriptions of natural settings—which he indulges more grandly in picturing the mountaintop retreat of Arete as the setting of the *Symposium*—and

which may also reflect the physical features of the Lycian environment.[14]

With respect to the present work, however, the account is clearly intended to set forth in popular form the fundamental issue of the nature of evil in the context of the Platonic cosmology of the *Timaeus* as it was commonly understood and discussed at the time. Indeed, it has been noticed by both Pépin and Stead that the account employs a common "schema" in distinguishing three possibilities regarding the origin of the cosmos, namely, that it is made (1) from a coexisting reality, or (2) by the divine nature itself, or (3) from nothing. This schema, already referred to by Plutarch, is mentioned by Tertullian in his account of the views of Hermogenes, and is also alluded to by Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria. Pépin further notes that the terms in which the protagonist states his eventual conviction that God ordered disorderly matter "so far as was possible" correspond to the position of Hermogenes as described by Tertullian.[15]

At issue for Methodius, of course, is the notion that God is responsible, in however indirect a fashion, for human evils. The subsequent arguments for and against a variety of forms of cosmological dualism, though not novel in themselves, are significant, because the cumulative stress on their difficulties paves the way for the subsequent rejection of any form of cosmological dualism. For Methodius, as

---

[14] See *Symp.* praef., XI. On the Lycian landscape, see Introduction, "Methodius of Olympus." The similarity between the description of the waves held in check by the divine order here and in Job 38:4–11 will not escape notice.

[15] Vaillant notes the verbal allusions to the Platonic *Tim.* and *Theat.,* in *De Autexousio,* 641. Otherwise, see J. Pépin, "Platonisme et Stoicisme chez Méthode d'Olympe," *Forma futuri: Studi in onore del Cardinale Michele Pellegrino* (Turin: Bottega d'Erasmo, 1975), 126–44, and G. C. Stead, *Divine Substance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 25. Also see Plutarch, *Plat. quaest.* IV.1003A; Tertullian, *Adv. Hermog.* II.1; Irenaeus, *AH* II.1–4; and Clement, *Strom.* II.16.74.1. Tertullian's ascription of this scheme to Hermogenes is found at *Adv. Hermog.* II.2. But Pépin also notes that the phrase ἀτακτῶς φερομένης, used by both the Methodian protagonist (*De lib. arbit.* III.9) and later by the orthodox speaker (VI.2) to describe matter in its disordered state, is attributed to Hermogenes in Hippolytus, *Haer.* VIII.17.2. It is, of course, only a matter of incidental interest that Plato himself did not refer to the "receptacle" of *Tim.* as "matter." Methodius' "Plato" is that of the contemporary handbooks found in what we know of the *doxographiai,* but in more serious philosophical discussion as well.

later becomes clear, evil resides in human freedom, and this freedom itself is the basis of our knowledge of, and relation to, the divine source of all things. It is the exposition of this view, with its comprehensive significance for Methodius' thought, which explains his placing the discussion in the broad context, anticipated already in the prefatory exhortation of the work, of the conflict between Greek philosophy and Christian truth.

Nor is it only the exhortation that shows the significance which Methodius attaches to this conflict. We shall see that the concluding exhortation of the work (XXII.10–11), whose importance is once again frequently overlooked (except as it has been thought to contain covert references to Origen), is a fervent denunciation of speaking of God as "having at his disposal a preexisting substance beside himself," or of seeking "to underestimate his omnipotence," since it is God who "gave existence to the universe, which did not exist before and was not constituted eternally." Nor, it concludes, must we reduce God to being an artisan, working with a substance coeternal with himself, or to a "creator of forms [οὐσιῶν] as well." This final exhortation refers to various views rejected in the course of the intervening dialogical exchanges. But its passionate tenor recalls that of the preface. Nor will this be the last time in the writings that these notes, in whatever different terms and contexts, are struck. We are here close to the heart of Methodius' convictions about the truth of Christianity in contrast to the errors of the philosophical tradition.

Against Two Uncreated Realities

The reply of the orthodox speaker (V–VI) to the opening account of the principal protagonist is a digest of conventional arguments against the possibility of there being two "uncreated" realities (νητα). However, he admits at the outset and repeats at the end that, since he and the protagonist think it more likely that there is a sole source of all that is, he need not treat the subject at any length.

There is a good deal more to this subject, as well as to Methodius'

treatment of it, than can easily be dealt with here. The argument against two "uncreated" realities—for Christians the argument that God is the sole "uncreated" reality—was one in which Christians were enlisted on one side of a contemporary philosophical debate. Plato, as always, was the definer of basic philosophical issues, but his teachings were now read with an eye to bringing order and coherence to the remains of classical philosophical teaching as a whole. The result was what nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholars have come to call "Middle Platonism" as distinct from the later or "Neoplatonism" of the school of Plotinus.[16]

The language of the debate is not at all unintelligible, since the question of what is "uncreated" and "created" is simply a replacement for what Plato would prefer to call what is always "being" and what is always "coming into being," or "being" and "becoming." Nor, in writings down to Methodius' time was much attention paid to the distinction of the two verbs γεν[ν]ητός has long been noticed.[17] Thus, the philosophical issue to which Methodius

[16] See, for instance, the standard work of J. M. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1977); also see P. Merlan, "Greek Philosophy from Plato to Plotinus," in A. M. Armstrong, ed., *Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), Part 1, 14–132.

[17] The issue of language here touched upon is of no little importance for understanding Christian comment on the relation of God and creation from the second into the fourth century. That there is frequently no subtle difference of meaning to be read into the variant spellings of γενητός. More important, early classical and Christian texts frequently make no distinction between the meanings to be attached to the several spellings, as Lebreton has shown at length

(footnote continued on next page)

addresses himself is simply between those who read Plato as sustaining the possibility of the existence of two realities, spiritual and material, and those who did not. Christians, at least by the time of Justin Martyr, had no doubt that their God was in fact the sole "uncreated" reality.[18] And it is this view that the orthodox speaker of the *De libero arbitrio* assumes that he shares with his opponent.

(footnote continued from previous page)

for classical, and Prestige for Christian, writers. To be sure, Origen is careful to use forms of γενητός as "created," at least where the distinction may be of importance in understanding its then present—or later—significance, though this convention tends to obscure the earlier lack of a clear distinction. More neutral reference to things simply "coming to be" or being "originate" are employed where possible. See below, esp. chap. 6, notes 13 and 14.

[18] The subject is again a complicated one, and just now slightly more complicated by Dillon's questioning of the attribution of the *Did.* to Albinus rather than, as the text has it, to Alcinous (see J. M. Dillon, trans., *Alcinous: The Handbook of Platonism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), ix–xiii. This is, however, not a subject that substantially affects our considerations, and so we shall continue to refer to "Albinus" as the author of *Did.* rather than resorting to Dillon's "A." Thus, it is customarily noted that Albinus (*Did.* XIV.3) (Dillon, *Middle Platonism,* 284ff.) assumed that Plato could be interpreted only as teaching one "uncreated," while Atticus, as reported in Procus (*In Tim.* I.276, 31ff. Diehl), took an opposing view. It has been argued by G. Andresen, "Justin und der mittlerer Platonismus," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentlichen Wissenschaft* 42 (1952–1953): 952ff., and naturally debated on various grounds, that Justin and those after him consciously adopted Albinus' position. In any case, it seems clear that Theophilus, *Ad Aut.* II.4, takes the view that God is sole "uncreated"; that this is the view of Justin at *Dial.* V; and of Irenaeus at *AH* II.1–5—among many other places; and of Origen, at *PA* II.1.4, IV.6, and in other places too many to mention. See also Tertullian, *Adv. Hermog.* XVIII, where it is simply axiomatic. It should, of course, be noted that for both Albinus and Atticus, and indeed for all shades of philosophical opinion known to us (e.g., Taurus, *In Tim.,* in Philoponus) it is assumed

(footnote continued on next page)

The peculiar feature of this treatment of the subject of two "uncreated" realities is that the orthodox speaker, having rather quickly referred to the standard argument that the existence of two such realities would allow for that of a third or even a multiplicity (V.2–5), turns to a lengthy refutation of what he himself admits to be a notion only marginally related to the main issues under discussion. This is the notion that there might be only one "uncreated" in the sense that God and the matter that he orders are in some fashion contained within one another. Such a notion, the speaker observes, would mean that God would himself be subject to disorder (VI.1–5).

Pépin has shown this argument to be a digest of standard Platonic refutations of Stoic views of the relation of God and matter which had already been employed in Christian writing. He suggests that its unusual prominence here may be the result of the author's concern with the real or supposed implications of Hermogenes' view of God as the orderer of eternally existing matter. But while this may well be the case, we do not know the context in which Methodius felt obliged to digress in this fashion. The fact is simply that the orthodox speaker subsequently proceeds on the assumption, relative to the problem of two "uncreated" realities, to argue that there can be no multiplicity of "uncreateds" (XII, 5–8, 9), and that only God is "uncreated," while the cosmos and its constituent elements are "created" through the Wisdom or the Word. The particular issue in question, however, is not entirely lost from sight, but is alluded to at least once more in the course of the work (XIII.1–5).[19]

(footnote continued from previous page)

that there is a preexistent matter from which the cosmos is formed. Methodius' insistence, like that of Irenaeus, and of Origen, on the creation of matter "from nothing" (ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων), is a related but different question from that from which we are presently concerned—though at Methodius' hands it becomes a matter of even greater importance than it had been for his predecessors because of his fundamental stress, both in *De lib. arbit.* and in the *Xeno,* on God as the direct and unmediated source of all that is.

[19] Pépin, *Forma futuri,* 135–41. The particular subject of God as contained in matter is treated in Tertullian, *Adv. Hermog.* XXXXIIII.1–2; cf. 27. But it is also referred to by Athenagoras, *Supp.* IV, and Tatian, *Orat.* IV. See also Irenaeus, *AH* II.1.1–5, and Clement, *Strom.* II.2.6, V.11.71.5, and VII.7.35.5.

Evil As a Quality or Substance

The more consequential exchanges that follow take their departure from the orthodox speaker's recognition that the final conclusion of his protagonist is that evil is to be explained by the fact that "there coexists with God a matter without qualities, out of which he crafted the creation of the cosmos [οὐσίαι), they are made by God out of what did not exist, so that God can indeed make things out of what does not exist. Indeed, the orthodox speaker observes, if human artisans can themselves fashion things that do not exist in the substances from which they fashion them, it is not improper to think that God can fashion not only qualities but also substances from what does not exist (VII.2–9). In any case, if evil is a quality rather than a substance, and if matter is without qualities, then God cannot be absolved from the creation of evil by attributing it to an "uncreated" matter (VIII.1–2).

A related line of argument now commences as the heterodox speaker withdraws to the position that evil must in fact be a substance, since it does not exist apart from substances. Here the orthodox speaker initiates a discussion of substance as such. A substance, it is agreed, is a bodily entity (τοῦ ἐνεργούντος), and is not a substance except insofar as the action can loosely be called a substance, as in the case of speaking of a murder or an adultery rather than of the act of a murderer or of an adulterer (VIII.3–10). Indeed, as in the case of physicians, grammarians, and rhetoricians, whose arts do not exist as substances in themselves, the acts of the wicked are not themselves substances apart from those who commit them (VIII.10–15).

The Intervention of the Second Protagonist

It is now that the second heterodox protagonist, mentioned as the companion of the orthodox speaker at the outset of the work, enters the discussion as anticipated. He at once admits that the principal

protagonist has been worsted in arguing that matter is devoid of qualities. But if, as he himself is prepared to argue, matter is indeed endowed with qualities from eternity, responsibility for evil nevertheless falls on matter rather than upon God (IX.1–3).

Evil As a Quality of Matter

In the much lengthier exchanges that follow with respect to various aspects of this subject, the orthodox speaker establishes that his new opponent, who sees the work as God in forming the cosmos as modifying the evil qualities of matter, must admit that God is either powerless or evil in that he has not modified all the evil qualities of matter (X–XI). Moreover, the orthodox speaker now raises questions about matter itself. If it is a composition of elements, as his opponent agrees, it must either be "created" from them, so that there "was a time [χαιρὸς] when it did not exist," or else the elements will be "uncreated," so that there will be a multiplicity of "uncreateds" of the sort already shown to be impossible (XII.1–4). Reiterating this last point as if for emphasis (XII.9), he then redirects the discussion to the problem of evil, since he observes that it is the essential concern of both his opponents to relieve God of the responsibility for evil.

Evil As Genus or Species

Here the orthodox speaker raises the issue of whether evil is a genus existing apart from its species, and argues that, since a genus does not exist apart from its species, evil is "created" rather than "uncreated," since its species are "created." Indeed, should one think that manifestations of evil are parts of a whole that is evil, that whole will still be "created," since it does not exist in separation from its parts. Even if one should speculate that evil existed incomplete before God created humanity, God, although seen as the organizer of matter, will once again be thought the cause of evil, which has been shown to be a human activity (XIII.1–5).

The Initial Arguments in Retrospect

The Slavic translation, which now supplies evidence of a shift in the direction of the discussion, makes it clear that the orthodox

speaker, having come once again to the point of reaffirming his view that evil is nothing else but the activity of a created agent, now submits to having his own view examined by his second opponent (XIV.1–6). Thus an important segment of the dialogue is brought to an end, and some review of its course and character is in order.

While the position of the principal protagonist is very broadly drawn, the specific subjects discussed—whether evil is a quality or a substance and the composition of matter—belong quite specifically within the range of contemporary philosophical issues that Christian writers of the second and third centuries felt obliged to discuss in view of their bearing on the question of evil.

In each of these sets of exchanges, Methodius' handling of these issues has its distinctive features. For instance, in regard to the exchanges between the orthodox speaker and his principal heterodox protagonist, as to whether evil is a quality or a substance, one can hear echoes of Irenaeus, who argues,[20] as Methodius does, that while it is not possible for a human artisan to make something without matter, it is possible for God to devise matter for his own creation (*Adversus haereses* II.10.4). A similar argument that the divine artisan differs from the human one is earlier found in Theophilus (*Ad Autolycum* I.4.3). Again, Origen considers it absurd to view evil as a substance, attributing that view to the Valentinians and Marcion,[21] and argues at length that matter is never known except in the form of specific substances with specific qualities (*De principiis* IV.6–7; cf. II.1.4). Yet it is peculiar to Methodius to contrive his arguments against both contentions of his heterodox protagonist in such a way as to lay particular emphasis on the point that the source of evil is to be sought *only* in the action of an active human agent.

Again, in regard to the discussion with the second heterodox protagonist, who argues that matter is eternally endowed with evil qualities and that God has modified them insofar as possible, one can find similarities to Tertullian, who, in another case where the views of Hermogenes seem to be in question, observes that, if this be the case,

---

[20] See above, note 15.

[21] Origen, *In Rom.* IV.12, *In Jn.* II.7.

God remains either powerless or responsible for evil, since he is either unwilling or unable to eradicate evil (*Adversus Hermogenem* X).[22] And Origen (*De principiis* IV.6–7), in discussing the lack of scriptural references to a ὕλη, reports as credible the views of those who think that matter does not exist as such, he himself concluding that it is possible to conceive, by abstraction, of a matter distinct from qualities and substance, though such a matter is to be regarded as "created" and not "uncreated." Once again, however, Methodius' distinctive touch is to be noted. The argument that the opposition of the elements implies that they do not constitute parts of a whole, so that matter may not exist as such, combined with the argument that if evil is a genus rather than a species, it must be "created," since it does not exist apart from its species, contrives to emphasize that God, the creator of the humanity responsible for evil action, would still be responsible for evil.

Aristotle, Plato, and the Stoa

One particular aspect of Methodius' organization of these points is worth noticing. Vaillant has drawn attention to the Aristotelian character of the argument regarding the opposition of elements and the relation of genus and species.[23] In fact, Aristotle does not go so far as to deny the existence of matter as a potency actualized in particular substances. But it is hard to miss the Aristotelian basis of the argument that the source of virtue and vice is to be sought in the activity of the active human agent, here deployed as the fundamental alternative to the efforts of both heterodox opponents to attribute evil to matter,[24] though the context in which the argument appears does not involve consideration of Aristotle's elaborate typology of vicious and virtuous activities, or of their bearing on his view of human perfection.

It is not surprising, of course, to find the employment of Aristotelian arguments in the discussion of philosophical issues in the eclectic philosophical milieu of the time. Yet it is of some interest that,

---

[22] See above, note 19.

[23] Vaillant, *De Autexousio,* 643, 645.

[24] See, for instance, Aristotle, *EN* II.2 and *Cat.* VIII, but many other places could be cited.

on the particular points in question, Methodius' rejection of a philosophical dualism employs Aristotelian elements in at least a more significant fashion than is found in the contemporary Christian writings with which we are familiar.[25] We shall, moreover, see later that Methodius' treatment of the relation of soul and body recalls that found in Stoic writings, and shows him to be conversant with earlier Christian discussions of the subject.[26] But we shall also suggest that, while we cannot identify specific philosophical sources for Methodius' peculiar emphases—for example, in the writings of Alexander of Aphrodisias and others whose thought anticipates what is commonly known as Neoplatonism[27]—the major points at which his thought on the relation of God and creation, and his Christian emphasis on human responsibility for evil, while they certainly reflect those of his predecessors, may be said to point beyond them. Methodius here anticipates a growing tendency to criticize the dualistic cosmology with which his pagan and Christian predecessors had wrestled in the way in which he brings emphatically to the fore the principle that there is a single divine source of human existence.

The Orthodox Speaker on the Free Will

The immediate outcome of the preliminary exchanges is to open the way for the orthodox speaker to assert the proposition that evil has

[25] We do not claim that the elements of Methodius' views are unique. As we already noted, Origen in particular is aware of, and plainly not unsympathetic to, the argument that matter does not exist as such (*PA* IV.4.6–7), and supports his own recurrent insistence on human freedom as the source of evil with his discussion of the proposition that, while things external are not in our power, their use is in our power (*PA* III.1.5; cf. III.4ff.). Rather, it is the development of such points in the particular way in which Methodius does it that is of note.

[26] See below, chap. 5, notes 22 and 23.

[27] It would certainly be of interest to know more than we do about Methodius' familiarity with Aristotelian criticism of early interpretations of *Tim.* which eventually find expression in the school of Plotinus. But dating alone would seem to preclude his having knowledge of Plotinus' work. And while Jerome reports that Methodius wrote extensively against Porphyry, the extant fragments *C. Porph.* are not his. A single argument that may reflect a criticism of Porphyry's criticism of Christian use of Old Testament prophecy is noted below; see chap. 5, note 42.

its origin in created action—or, as now explicitly described, in the free will—rather than in a cosmological dualism.

In the second part of the dialogue, which now commences, it should be noted that there is a tendency for the orthodox speaker to anticipate the objections of his opponents rather than to engage in dialogue with them. In fact, the questions of the opponents serve chiefly to draw specific attention to these objections. Despite this distinct change of approach, however, these objections, though chiefly raised by the speaker himself, serve to mark out the major steps of the argument.

The essential view of the orthodox speaker is that nothing is "defective by nature [**κακόν**) from the use made of it (XV.1). This point, illustrated by reference to such things as adultery, murder, the making of idols, and even the use of fire for the manufacture of implements that may be used for good or evil, leads to the reiteration of the view that such qualities consist in human actions, and are not "uncreated" (XV.2–7).[28]

The first major elaboration of this view occurs in a reply to a question by the second opponent, who intervenes simply to ask whether the impulse toward evil lies in the manner in which humanity was created by God or in some other cause (XVI.1). The orthodox speaker replies that humanity (**τὸ αὐτεξούσιον**)—and thus alone is able to serve God freely rather than of necessity. In this way the human creature is given the possibility of receiving the gift of incorruption, the higher good that results from obedience to the divine command (XVI.2–10). It was, then, disobedience that was the unique cause of evil; and disobedience is to be counted "created" and not "uncreated," since its author was "created."

[28] We are indebted to the Slavic translation for introducing the basic argument of the orthodox in terms of a review of the point that evil is an accident rather than a substance, and that its origin is either in an act of human will or in the just punishment of such an act by God (XIV.5–6), points that allow him to repeat that qualities are not "uncreated" (XV.6–7). In both cases, the translation serves to show the progression of the argument.

But, the orthodox speaker goes on, evil arose against the desire of God, and against the nature of humanity itself. Adam and Eve learned evil from the serpent who taught disobedience out of envy at the higher good humanity is destined for, as a slave becomes envious of the son of the master (XVII.1–6). In the course of an elaborate illustration, he contrives to show how confidence in the prescription of a physician can be undermined by an enemy who convinces the patient to act to his own detriment on the ground that the prescription is false. And he adds that the devil, being possessed of intelligence, knew that disobedience was evil, just as humanity had the ability of willing or not willing to follow his teaching. Thus evil is not a substance, and the punishment of both humanity and the devil is just (XVIII.1–12).[29]

The similarly contrived exchanges that now follow relate the devil more closely to this view of evil. Had the devil been created evil, he could not be justly punished by God, and would not be referred to in the Scriptures as a deserter and an apostate (XIX.1–6). On the other hand, God foreknew the defection of the devil, but allowed it to happen so that the antithesis between good and evil would be known, and obedience to the divine command not be reduced to servility (XIX.7–10). Nor did God subsequently destroy the devil, since in that case there would have been no human challenge in willing good or evil, and no chance of achieving victory over the devil of the sort that results from the struggles that human beings, like athletes vying with those with whom they exercise, undergo as training in obedience (XX.1–8).[30]

On this note, the second opponent, without admitting to be convinced as yet, returns to the subject of matter, more particularly to why God has formed the cosmos at all if matter does not eternally

[29] The illustration, obviously an interpretation of Genesis 3, is one of a number of pieces of evidence concerning Methodius' familiarity with medical practice (see Introduction and chap. 5, on the *De res.*). The *De lib. arbit.* XVIII exists only in the Slavic translation, except for the fragment at XVIII.8–9 which restates the point that envy is the cause of evil, so that an action, even if not evil in itself, becomes evil because God wills that it should not be done.

[30] This chapter is once again preserved only in the Slavic translation.

coexist. It is in returning to this subject that the final sections of the dialogue, with its concluding exhortation already mentioned, take shape.

The Sources of the Orthodox View

If we take a moment to consider the background of the argument presented here by the orthodox speaker, it is in no way surprising that the discussion of the free will should immediately involve consideration of the place of the devil in the origin of evil. Origen is not alone when he remarks, enigmatically, to Celsus that, if anyone wants to know the true origin of the evils that beset humanity, it will be found in the "truth about the so-called evil spirit and his angels, and who he was before he became a devil, and what caused his so-called angels to revolt with him" (*Contra Celsum* IV.65). The subject of the origin of evil, no matter how carefully it could be discussed in relation to the philosophical thinking of the time, was, in Christian perspective, unavoidably related to the account of the work of the devil.

Nor, of course, is the emphasis on the origin of evil in the "free will" (αὐτεξουσίως), in any way surprising. Both Irenaeus and Origen are concerned, in their different ways, to insist that such self-determination or self-empowerment is both the root of the human problem and the essential characteristic of humanity's likeness to the divine nature.[31]

---

[31] In considering the importance of such "self-determinating" or "self-empowering" in the Greek Christian writings of the period, it needs to be said that the Latin *liberum arbitrium* badly translates the Greek αὐτεξούσιον, and that much Western discussion of "free will" has proceeded along lines calculated to obscure the Greek Christian stress on its being simply a determinative characteristic of human nature. In any case, it is with this stress in mind that the writings with which we have to do must be reviewed. The older work of D. Amand, *Fatalisme et liberté dans l'antiquité grecque: Récherche sur l'argumentation morale antifataliste de Carneade chez les philosophes grecs et les théologiens chrétiens des quatre premiers siècles* (Louvain, Belgium: Bibliothèque de l'Université, 1945), is still invaluable for showing the Christian use of arguments for such a "free will" within the context of contemporary philosophical discussion. But see now A. Dihle, *The Theory of Will in Classical Antiquity* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1982), both generally, and specifically in chap. 5, on the subject in Christian writing from Irenaeus onward. See also J. R. Lyman, *Christology and Cosmology: Models of Divine Activity in Origen, Eusebius,*

(footnote continued on next page)

Evidence of Methodius' familiarity with earlier treatments of the function of the devil is apparent in the exchanges we have just summarized. Most obvious, perhaps, is the similarity with Irenaeus, who emphasizes that Satan acted out of envy, and describes him as an apostate (*Adversus haereses* V.21.2ff.; cf. 23–24, *Demonstratio* XXXI). Tertullian, in his work against Hermogenes, argues that the devil is allowed to continue to exist in order that humanity may be afforded a chance to triumph over the one who has vanquished him (*Adversus Hermogenem* II.10).[32] At this point, however, Methodius does not

(footnote continued from previous page)

and Athanasius (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), again generally, but esp. 13ff. on its relation to broader cosmological issues. R. W. Sharples, in his edition of *Alexander of Aphrodisias: On Fate* (London: Duckworth, 1983) deals in particular with the bearing of this work on Christian discussion. The immediate problem, for Irenaeus and Origen among other Christian writers, was the Valentinian conviction that a certain spiritual elite, possessed of divine nature, were destined for full redemption, while the majority of humanity was destined for one form or another of lesser states, if not for destruction. In these circumstances, in particular, emphasis on the "self-determination" or "self-empowerment" of humanity was essential to the proclamation of salvation through Christ as open to all. In Irenaeus, this aspect of human nature, characteristic of what the Valentinians called the *psychic* as distinct from the *pneumatic* creation, is the basis on which the whole of humanity is to be viewed as created in the divine image, the divine alone being truly "self-determining." See R. A. Norris, "The Transcendence and Freedom of God in Irenaeus," in W. R. Schoedel and R. C. Wilken, eds., *Early Christian Literature and the Classical Intellectual Tradition* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1979), 87–100, and "Irenaeus on Soul." The particular context of Irenaeus' view in Valentinian assignment of "self-determination" and hence of salvation by works and faith to *psychic* Christians has been highlighted by E. H. Pagels, especially in *The Gnostic Paul* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973), chap. 1. For Origen, in much the same way, though restated in the context of his own debate with similar opponents, the free will was the peculiar characteristic of the rational natures made in the "image of the [divine] image," the Wisdom or Word, and the locus of its adhering to or departing from orientation to the divine nature itself. See Lyman, *Christology and Cosmology,* chap. 2, esp. 47ff., with bibliographical references. Methodius' habitual use of αὐτεξούσιος and related terms in contrast to others available follows the use of both Irenaeus and Origen.

[32] On the place of Hermogenes in the background of Methodius' arguments, see above, notes 15 and 19. In view of the fact that Theophilus of Antioch is said to have written against Hermogenes, and that he is a more likely source of Methodius' knowledge of the latter's views than Tertullian, it is worth noting that Theophilus' extensive review of the disobedience of Adam (*Ad Aut.* II.21, cf. II.4), though set against the notion of the existence of two "uncreated" realities as it is, is innocent of this particular reference to the motives of the devil.

follow Athenagoras in describing the devil as a fallen angel, as he would later do in the *Aglaophon* (I.37), even though there is at least some reason to think that he does refer to Athenagoras' *Supplicatio* in the present work.[33] Unless the Slavic translation has obscured the course of Methodius' argument, the description of the devil as a "created" intelligence who is nonetheless envious of the great gift of incorruptibility awaiting humanity remains undeveloped in this treatment of the subject.

Nonetheless, Methodius' exposition of the traditional subject of the devil is one that emphasizes the view that the cause of evil is to be sought in a particular action of a created agent, so that his basic treatment of the free will is brought into close relation to his arguments against a cosmological dualism of God and matter as a necessary explanation of evil. As such, it is far from being a rehearsal of earlier views, supplying as it does a philosophical basis for dealing with a subject that had come to present itself as important in the third century, in the wake of the work not only of Irenaeus but of Origen.

The Conclusion of the Work:
The Purpose of Creation

The final section of the work returns to the problem of matter by way of the heterodox speaker's asking why God formed the cosmos at all if it was not to bring order to coexisting matter (XXII.1). And it is on this question that the dialogue ends with the final exhortation mentioned at the beginning of this chapter.

The agreement of the orthodox speaker to return to this question is prefaced by his saying that it is impossible and presumptuous to explain the divine will. But since God, out of love for humanity, has given hints of the purpose of creation, he himself will undertake to say what he thinks he knows regarding it (XXII.2). Vaillant has noticed that the argument of the orthodox speaker is cast in terms similar to those of the disclaimer to certitude in *Timaeus* 29CD, and suggests that Methodius here has in mind his prefatory reference to

[33] See R. M. Grant, *The Greek Apologists of the Second Century* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1988), 194.

the difference between philosophical reason and the "harmonious song of the prophets and apostles."[34] In any case, there is no question that it is the myth of the *Timaeus* which is here in view, in regard both to what is to be affirmed and denied regarding the purpose of creation.

Of the various reasons that led God to create (κόσμου γένεσιν) (XXII.3). He proceeds to interweave these themes by reference to the necessity of the human artist to exercise his own art, and, if he is a good artist, to rejoice in the service that he thereby renders to others. In the same way, God rejoiced to create the cosmos from what did not exist, and to give creatures not only existence but also the promise of the joy of the supreme good. So it is that God has not only made the cosmos but placed in humanity knowledge of the divine existence (XXII.4–8).

And the speaker now adds two final points. The proper conclusion to his analysis is that the creation is made for humanity so that it might glorify God as God glories in it. But one should not think that God is ever inactive: his goodness was exercised in thought of the creation before it was realized in fact, so that it can never have been said that it is a thing imperfect (XXII.8–0).

The speaker's explanation plainly relies on the opening theme of the *Timaeus* 29E–30A on the divine goodness as the cause of the formation of the cosmos, and proceeds thereafter to restate arguments already developed regarding the analogy between human and divine artisans, the formation of the cosmos from that which does not exist, and the final good for which humanity is destined. The stress on the goodness of God, as well as the final caution against regarding God as ever inactive, will immediately remind anyone of the comments of Philo and Origen (e.g., *De opificio mundi* XIX and *De principiis* I.4.4) on the presence of the creation in the mind of God before its actualization. This matter will concern us when we consider, in par-

[34] Vaillant, *De Autexousio,* 648.

ticular, the question of Methodius' view of Origen's teaching concerning eternal creation.

But we must set this matter aside for the time being. If the explanation of the orthodox speaker thus begins with reference to the myth of the *Timaeus,* it is at once clear that it also involves a reiteration of several interpretations of that work that have already been repudiated in the early exchanges of the dialogue. Thus it is that the final exhortation cautions against accepting the notion that God worked with a "preexistent substance," or any underestimating of his omnipotence in any way that reduces him to the status of a human artisan. Nothing is coeternal with God, and the cosmos was not created from part of matter. God alone is the maker of forms (οὐσιῶν) as well (XXII.10–11).

This important passage is not without its problems, and the Greek that we have is not precisely reproduced in the Slavic translation. But it can scarcely be doubted that, as it stands, it fairly identifies the elements of the *Timaeus* that the dialogue has been concerned to oppose, in the form in which they have been represented by the heretical protagonists. Vaillant remarks that Platonic parallels aside, Methodius is "not so much a Platonist as an Aristotelian" with respect to the matters at issue.[35] But Methodius, whose use of Aristotelian arguments we have already observed, nevertheless *opposes* contemporary interpretations of Platonic cosmological issues *from within* a Platonic framework of thought, as well as from a Christian perspective. He interprets what he regards as basic Christian teaching from a position that both rejects dualistic interpretations of Plato and reveals his sympathies with philosophical tendencies beginning to emerge in his own time.

It is, we should finally note, with a brief statement that these are the true in contrast to the impious teachings that must be maintained, that the work is brought to an end (XXII.11). The note struck is, of course, the one struck at the outset, in the contrast between the Sirens' song and the chorus of the prophets. But if it serves only to

[35] Vaillant, *De Autextousio,* 645.

restate the significance that Methodius attaches to the subject of the dialogue, it confirms, if confirmation were needed, that this significance has been in his mind all along.

Origen and Gnosticism in the De libero arbitrio

It has been necessary to review the structure and development of the *De libero arbitrio* in order to come to some clear view of the importance of the work, both in itself and in its relation to the rest of the Methodian corpus. Perhaps the principal conclusion to be drawn from this exercise is that the sharp juxtaposition drawn between a cosmological dualism of spirit and matter and Christian teaching regarding the free will as the origin of evil is scarcely an immature exercise or a rehearsal of matters long settled. It belongs distinctly to the issues of the third century with which Methodius was involved.

There remains, however, the second of the persistent questions regarding the work, which we noticed at the outset of this chapter and have thus far delayed answering until the evidence for dealing with it could be set out: namely, the perplexing question of possible covert criticism of Origen in the work, and this as related to the broader question of what views, gnostic, philosophical, or otherwise, the heterodox speakers actually represent in the work as a whole.

We have already mentioned Vaillant's tentativeness on the subject of criticism of Origen here, and now will return to it as the most thoughtful treatment of the issue. While granting that there is no allusion to Origen in the work, and indeed many points of agreement with his teaching, Vaillant notes various points at which the views here attacked are repeated by the heterodox speakers of the *Aglaophon* and the *Xeno,* in particular the repetition of the contrast between the Sirens' song and the chorus of the Gospel here and in the *Aglaophon* (cf. I.27.1). In the final resort, he places most emphasis on the concluding exhortation against the coexistence of matter as having in view Origen's teaching on the eternal creation of the cosmos. Indeed, referring to the passage in the *De cibis* regarding the composition of the *Aglaophon* which we have already mentioned, he concludes that the vehement exhortation at the end of the *De libero arbitrio* is "not

. . . a declaration of war, but . . . a declaration of rupture with Origenism."[36]

The difficulties with this view should already be apparent. Whatever the explanation of the parallels between the *De libero arbitrio* and the later criticisms of Origen, the work is notable for its general agreement with Origen in pitting free will against matter as the cause of evil. In fact, such agreement continues to be clear in the final exhortation, with its emphasis on the divine goodness, on God's never being inactive, and in the vehement rejection of a coexistent matter itself.[37] To be sure, Methodius later came to read Origen on "eternal creation" as implying such a coexistent matter; and his doing so is one of the crucial reasons for his eventual misrepresentation of Origen. But where that point is recognized, it can be said without question that the *De libero arbitrio* is not a covert attack on Origen. It is instead a work that could, however mistakenly, be regarded as the authentic work of Origen, which the *Philocalia Origenis* and the *Adamantius* take it to be.

In contrast to this question, that of Methodius' concern with forms of gnostic teaching in the *De libero arbitrio* is more tantalizing and difficult to answer. While the work presents itself as a criticism of elements of the philosophical tradition in the name of Christianity, there is no doubt that Methodius belongs among those writers—in-

[36] Vaillant, *De Autexousio,* 649–52. In taking the view of the *De cibis* that he does, Vaillant is forced to overlook the substantial indebtedness to Origen in the *Symp.* that the *De cibis* passage also refers to. His only alternative would be to place *De lib. arbit.* later than the *Symp.,* which he does not seem to be inclined to do, and which we shall show in chap. 3 to be more than doubtful.

[37] We need not here delay long over Origen on eternal creation, which will have to be considered in detail in the course of chap. 6. Suffice it to say that, as it evolves in the course of Origen's treatment of the ἀεὶ γεννητός nature of the Wisdom or Word that is the divine agent in the creation of the cosmos, it involves speculation, in various forms and with careful qualifications, on the notion that the cosmos itself must be "always created" by the Word (see *PA* II.2,10, 4.5; IV.4.—among many places). Whatever difficulties there may be with this teaching, it does not involve saying that the matter of the cosmos itself is "coexistent" with God, or a second "uncreated" reality, views that we have already noted Origen denies with the same firmness as does Methodius himself. See R. A. Norris, *God and World in Early Christian Theology* (New York: Seabury, 1965), chap. 5, for a brief account of Origen's teaching, which has of course been discussed far more extensively in many other works.

cluding Irenaeus and Tertullian, as well as Clement of Alexandria and Origen—who saw philosophical influence underlying strands of gnostic teaching. We have, in particular, noticed some evidence that the opponents in *De libero arbitrio* represent the teaching of Hermogenes. Though it is certainly doubtful that he is to be taken as a "gnostic" rather than simply as a philosophical dualist, he is as certainly included among the "heretics" in the criticisms of Tertullian and Hippolytus.

It would be surprising, then, if Methodius' work were not read in its own time as a covert criticism of gnostic teaching, as indeed it was by the *Adamantius* and other sources that identified the opponents as Valentinians. Moreover, it should be added that the issue of gnostic teaching is clearly in view in the later *Symposium,* with its concern for the presumed gnostic implications of popular concern with "continence" in contrast to chastity as the way to perfection. Indeed, we shall see that it is in this connection that the *Symposium* summarizes and alludes to arguments of the *De libero arbitrio.*[38]

It is just possible, then, to suppose that it was in the circumstances of the writing of the *Symposium* that Methodius came to associate his opposition to a cosmological dualism, the dominant theme of the *De libero arbitrio,* explicitly with the issue of gnostic teaching as it is assumed to be related to such a dualism in the writings of his predecessors. But this must be a possibility to be explored in discussing the *Symposium* itself, the criticism of that work and its bearing on Methodius' later estimate of the provenance of what he came to regard as the errors of Origen.

This said, however, it is important to note again that the work, far from identifying specific opponents of the gnostic sort, sets itself in particular opposition to the cosmological scheme of the *Timaeus*.

---

[38] See, among other places, *Symp.* VIII.13, and especially 14–16, with its attack on views of fate, as a place where emphasis on the free will is pitted against contemporary views of that subject in a fashion similar to philosophical rejections of fate (see, e.g., Alexander of Aphrodisias, *De fato*). Indeed, we shall see that the arguments of *De lib. arbit.* are deployed in *Symposium* against the notion that human life is controlled by fate. See chap. 3, note 48. I remain unconvinced, however, that the subject of fate is at issue, at least in any explicit way, in the present work.

The significance of this point should not be missed. It confirms our picture of Methodius, as perhaps he himself intended it should be, as an independent Christian teacher, concerned to expound Christian faith in opposition to the philosophical teachings of the time with which he was conversant and whose persuasive power he recognized. Moreover, it was his approach to a cosmological dualism that eventually led him to identify the speculations of Origen regarding embodiment and eternal creation as similar to the views of the opponents of the *De libero arbitrio.* The consistency of Methodius' thought throughout the writings becomes clearer when his initial concern with the issues treated in the *De libero arbitrio* is recognized for what it is.

When we turn next to the *Symposium,* we will not discover a different Methodius from that of the *De libero arbitrio.* We will find the same independent teacher, addressing the same basic issues, dealing with the place of chastity in the Christian life, and with its importance, especially in contrast to views of "continence" that imply that embodiment is the cause of sins. For Methodius, chastity prepares both soul and body for their ultimate perfection at the "restoration of all things" (ἀποκατάστασις). That he is led, in the course of the work, to a very broad discussion of the divine economy of salvation, has made it susceptible to interpretation as a general theological treatise. And, indeed, it is invaluable for providing access to the range of Methodius' views on a wide variety of contemporary theological issues. But it will be misunderstood unless, read against the background of the *De libero arbitrio,* it is recognized, in its own quite different way, as reflecting engagement with issues not unrelated to those that the earlier work regards as essential to understanding the Christian faith.

3—
The *Symposium:*
Chastity and the Plan of Salvation

The *Symposium* is the most accessible of Methodius' writings, and the only one to survive in its entirety in Greek. While it was omitted from the Slavic translation, it has been the work most frequently translated, and certainly the most widely commented on, in recent times.[1] Unfortunately, however, the work, though notable for its broad consideration of a variety of theological themes, has too often been read out of its context and without consideration of its relation to the rest of his writings.

The *Symposium* consists of a set of discourses, contributions to a verbal contest in praise of chastity as the highest form of Christian life, given at a banquet held in mysterious circumstances at the mountaintop retreat of a certain Arete, who presides over the event and finally awards the most luxurious crown of victory to a certain Thecla.[2]

---

[1] In English, see the already mentioned translation of Musurillo in *ACW*, which preceded his French edition and translation in *SC* (see above, Introduction, note 2), as well as the older translation of W. R. Clark, in the *Ante-Nicene Fathers* series. But see also J. Farges, *Méthode d'Olympse: "Le Banquet des dix vierges"* (Paris: Gabalda, 1932); L. Fendt, *Des heiligen Methodius von Olympus: "Gastmahl oder Jungfräulichkeit"* (Munich: Schermann, 1911); P. Ubaldi, S. *Metodio d'Olimpo: "Il convito delle dieci vergini"* (Turin: Editrice Internationale, 1926); and A. Zeoli, trans., *Metodio d'Olimpo: "Il Banchette delle dieci vergini"* (Florence: Liberia Editrice, 1952). Nor is this list complete, or inclusive of a wide variety of studies of the work.

[2] The text of the work used here is that of Musurillo, *SC,* with its divisions into

(footnote continued on next page)

But the work is plainly a good deal more than a celebration of chastity. The successive discourses are contrived to place the subject of the ascetic life within a broad setting: commencing with the introduction of the call to chastity into the divine economy of redemption now entering its final phrase with the Incarnation of the Word; continuing with a discussion of the struggles required to attain chastity; and culminating in a description of the life of chastity as foreshadowing the final perfection of soul and body at the "consummation of all things (ἀποκατάστασις)." These main considerations are organized and set apart from each other by what Musurillo felicitously calls "interludes," in which those recounting the occasion comment briefly on the excellence of the various speakers. Meanwhile, the various discourses bring into view a variety of issues—Christological, anthropological, and eschatological—and display a wealth of interests—exegetical, biological, and numerological among them—that seem extraneous, even in this broad framework, to the discussion of the ascetic life.

It is not surprising that the *Symposium* has seemed to be an introduction to the main themes of Methodius' thought, and even to be something in the nature of a "commonplace book," the repository of observations that do not all contribute directly to the central purpose of the work. It has occasionally been suggested that it was intended as a general work of Christian teaching, or at least became the vehicle for such teaching. In this connection, it has been compared to Ire-

(footnote continued from previous page)

discourses, chapters, and marginal numbering. Musurillo's discussion of the text, here and in his slightly earlier English translation in *ACW*, provides the best introduction to its history, the manuscript traditions, and related matters. The significance of the use of the Ἀρετή ("excellence"), with its many uses and connotations in the Greek philosophical tradition for the achievement of perfection, as the name of the person in whose retreat the banquet is held needs no comment. Thecla is the name of the legendary virgin and martyr companion of Paul celebrated in the *Acts of Paul and Thecla,* whose presence in the work as the one who receives the "crown" will be the subject of considerable discussion below. The names of the other speakers are likely those of contemporary Christian women, and do not appear to have any such particular significance in relation to the value of their discourses as does that of Thecla. If we are right in our estimate of the literary character of the work, they presumably no more represent actual people than do the names of the speakers of the *Aglaophon* (see below, chap. 5, note 16).

naeus' *Demonstratio,* and to Clement of Alexandria's *Paedagogus,* among the works of writers with whom Methodius was familiar. Without entirely denying the appropriateness of the latter suggestion in particular,[3] we shall see that the *Symposium* has an inner coherence of its own, and that most, if not all, of the seemingly extraneous matters considered are related to the main purpose of the work. This purpose is to recommend chastity as the divinely instituted way to achieve the perfection of soul and body in contrast to a rejection of sexual relations, since they involve contact with the body, as the cause of sins; and which, as currently embraced, separates its adherents from the generall community of believers: the Church. Seen in this way, such seemingly digressive aspects of the work as the defense of procreation as the means of forming the perfect number of humanity, the argument concerning the essential goodness of the physical creation, and the discussion of the importance of service to the community of the baptized easily fall into place. And so also do criticisms of those Christians who do not accept the Incarnation of the Word, who entertain a wide range of heretical views, and who abandon sexual relations while maintaining a vicious or self-indulgent style of life.

Despite this thematic coherence, it must be admitted that the work still has something of the character of a "commonplace book" at points. But we can, after all, only imagine the interests of those, presumably certain ascetic women, for whom it was written. In fact, its principal negative concern is to oppose a view of the ideal life based on a cosmological—whether philosophical or gnostic—dualism of the sort attacked in the *De libero arbitrio.* Such a dualism will subsequently be in view in the criticisms of Origen, whom Methodius will have come to regard as drawing dangerously close to accepting in his speculations on embodiment and eternal creation.

[3] For a digest of views on the literary style and models for the work, see B. R. Voss, *Dialog,* 102–15, with its comprehensive bibliographical references. Methodius' recurrent use of Clement naturally brings the broadly catechetical *Paedagogus* to mind. The *Demonstratio,* while also catechetical, is carefully organized to lay out the fundamental elements of confession of faith, and then to expand on issues related to them. While Methodius knows both works, however, neither is likely, as such, to have been looked to as a model.

Preliminary Matters

The Structure of the Symposium and Its Purpose

No one can miss the similarities between this work and its Platonic namesake, or escape noticing the significance of a Christian writing that replaces the Platonic eros with the Christian desire for perfection which finds its fullest expression in the life of chastity. As in the case of the Platonic *Symposium,* the work is a report of the discourses held at a banquet of which the reporter claims to have had an account from one of the participants. The reporter in this case is a certain Eubolion, a feminine form of the "Eubolius" that is Methodius' own pseudonym in the *Sistelius* and the *Aglaophon.* She has sought out a certain Gregorion for an account of the banquet, which Gregorion has received from one of the participants and is eager to give. The work as a whole consists chiefly of that report, with its main sections marked off by the brief comments of Eubolion and Gregorion already mentioned.

If the work is thus modeled on the Platonic *Symposium,* it has peculiarities of its own. The Platonic work, written down as a report at third hand, has a mysterious aura. But it describes a banquet easily recognizable as such by those familiar with the customs of classical times. Methodius' banquet is more mysterious by far. The mountaintop retreat of Arete is a place approached by an arduous climb up a steep ascent, and is described as containing a garden facing east and dominated by a willow tree, an ἄγνος or "chaste tree" (*Symposium,* praef.), at which the participants in the contest eventually join the victor, the legendary virgin and martyr, Thecla, Paul's convert and associate, in a hymn to Christ the bridegroom whose coming they await (XI).

If precedents are wanted for Methodius' use of the Platonic *Symposium,* one lies ready to hand in Origen's comparison of the Platonic work with the Song of Songs: Origen refers approvingly to the "many different books [of the Greeks], some in dialogue style," that have tried to show that "love is no other than the power that leads the soul from earth to the lofty heights of heaven, and that we cannot arrive at the highest blessedness unless the ardent desire of love impels us"

(*In Cant.,* praef.). Whether or not Methodius has Origen's observation in mind, he himself relates the Platonic theme and the imagery of the Song in the course of the work.[4]

For the specific details of Methodius' banquet, however, we need to look elsewhere. The figure of Arete may recall the mysterious woman in the popular *Shepherd of Hermas.* But it is just possible that the source of most of the details is Methodius' own imagination. The description of the setting may be counted among those passages in the writings that reflect the Lycian landscape. The life of chastity, in the view of this work, is the result of an arduous ascent from the passions, but it places those who embrace it in a position to glimpse the life of the world to come. And it has been noticed that the gathering in the garden, facing east, in the early morning, has contemporary liturgical, and particularly eucharistic, overtones that give special meaning to the thanksgiving hymn of Thecla.

The conclusion of Methodius' work also echoes another feature of the opening of the Platonic *Symposium* (172B) when it refers to a separate account that has been given of the banquet. Eubolion asks whether the "Telmesian woman" (Τελμησιακή), more elegantly rendered as "the Lady of Telmesus," has heard the discourses, and Gregorion reports that she and Methodius had received an account of them from Arete herself. It has been thought that Methodius is here appending his "signature" to the work and possibly referring to the person at whose request it was written.[5]

---

[4] We need not do more than notice the extant or reported *symposia,* inspired by the work of Plato, to some of which Origen doubtless refers. Apart from Voss, *Dialog.,* see the still basic essay of A. Hug, "Symposion-Literatur," *Real-Encyclopädie der klassischen Altertumwissenschaft.* Ed. A. Paulys, G. Wissowa, and W. Kroll. Series II, Vol. 4A, cols. 1274–83. Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 1932. See also O. Murray, ed., *Sympotica: A Symposium on the Symposium.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990. Methodius' working together of the motif of the love of the bridegroom in the Song of Songs with the parable of the wise and foolish virgins (Mt. 25:1–13) appears throughout the work and provides the setting and rationale for the concluding hymn of Thecla.

[5] On the place with which the woman in question is identified, probably Termessus in Pisidia (misspelled "Telmessus" in the Greek text), as well as the reference as a signature of the work, see Musurillo, *ACW* 240. I know of no better explanation than Musurillo's to the unanswerable question of whether she was a benefactor of

(footnote continued on next page)

Whatever the case, the final exchanges that now ensue between Eubolion and Gregorion are of particular interest for understanding the purpose of the work. Here the question is taken up as to whether it is better to have struggled with and overcome desire or lust (ἐπιθυμία), as Eubolion successfully contends, or to have lived free from it, as Gregorion initially argues. This discussion, where it has been treated at all, has been regarded as inconsequential or even extraneous. Musurillo viewed it as sophistical since "it would imply that the human condition could not be improved if it were free from concupiscence," and that one who received perfection free from it "would be inferior from the viewpoint of moral virtue."[6] But it is just possible that this is precisely Methodius' point. The carefully constructed exchanges, which bring the account of the banquet back to reality, so to speak, serve to emphasize a theme that recurs in the discourses themselves. The life of the chaste is not different from the kind of life to which all Christians are called, and in which all must struggle with the passions.

The discussion thus fits well at the end of a work concerned not merely to recommend Christian asceticism but to ground it in orthodox rather than heterodox teaching. What we have come to know of the association of the tradition about Thecla, in the *Acts of Paul and Thecla,* with an interest in "continence" (σωφροσύνη) throughout the work is a matter of some interest to be mentioned later.[7]

(footnote continued from previous page)

Methodius, a member of an ascetic community with which Methodius had some unexplained relation, or merely an acquaintance or admirer.

[6] Musurillo, *ACW* 241; see below, note 60.

[7] Methodius' habitual use of ἐγκράτεια might lead us to expect him to use the latter term, is seen in the *Symp.* I.2, 4. It is a small matter, but may shed some light on the strategy of his work, as suggested below in note 60. On the Thecla tradition, see D. R. MacDonald, *The Legend and the Apostle,* and also W. Rordorf, "Tradition and Composition in the Acts of Thecla," in D. R. MacDonald, ed., *The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles,* Semeia, no. 38, (Decatur, Ga.:

(footnote continued on next page)

The Historical Setting of the Discourses

Special mention needs to be made of the question of the time at which Methodius intends the reader to understand the mysterious contest at the retreat of Arete to have taken place, and of the distinctly different answers that have been proposed to it. This question, as we shall see, has some little bearing on the purpose of the work.

Musurillo confidently placed the contest at the time of Paul,[8] and this is certainly not implausible, since the Platonic *Symposium* is laid in a time past and Methodius' work gives a place of prominence to the supposed first-century figure of Thecla. But it may also be seen as set in the time just before the ἀποκατάστασις itself, when the primal human condition is to be restored; and this is suggested by the "paradisiacal" setting and the liturgical or paraliturgical character of the final gathering in the garden facing east.

While the question is not perhaps finally answerable, it would seem that Musurillo's assumption is less than satisfactory. Methodius' work is no simple copy of the Platonic *Symposium,* and differs from it precisely with respect to its mysterious setting. Moreover, Thecla is described as having already undergone martyrdom, seemingly at some time in the past (VIII.17). At the same time, however, Methodius' view of the ἀποκατάστασις implies no return to a primal perfection, and is yet to be achieved in the plan of God. While we shall see that his use of "millenarian" themes is highly spiritualized,[9] and there is no reason to think that we can locate the occasion of the contest at any particular point in a specific future, it is certainly set before the final coming of Christ, and thus before the true "consummation of all things." And indeed the work's liturgical overtones suggest the same thing, since the notion of the eucharist as present

(footnote continued from previous page)

Scholars Press, 1986), 43–52. See Introduction, note 14, on recent interest in "continence (ἐγκρατεία)" and Appendix 2, "The Hymn of Thecla and the Purpose of the *Symposium."*

[8] Musurillo, *ACW*, 12.

[9] See my "Methodius' Millenarianism," *SP*24 (1993): 306–15, and below, note 50.

participation in the future life with Christ would preclude its being used to describe the ultimate completion of God's work.

Perhaps the best that can be said, then, is that the contest is set at some mysterious point in the future, beyond the present cycle of living and dying. It does not portray its participants as having reached a final perfection, though they may be on the verge of doing so. Whatever Methodius intends us to understand as being the occasion of the contest, the discourses have to do with the eschatological significance of the Christian life as lived in the present age in anticipation of the age to come. Despite its possible similarity with the visions of the *Shepherd of Hermas,* the work makes no claim to be visionary in character, or to be the vehicle of a special revelation other than that which is available to all in the Scriptures, as these are liberally cited in support of the ascetic life as the means of preparing now for the future to come.

The Theological Sources of the Symposium

In the Introduction we mentioned that the writings contain evidence that Methodius relied chiefly on the works of Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen in the formulation of his thought, all three of whom have appeared in the previous chapter. It is in the *Symposium,* however, that Methodius' penchant for direct quotation, paraphrase, and allusion makes it easy to identify his sources. As Farges recognized, the work is indebted to Irenaeus for its broad sketch of the divine economy of salvation, and to Origen for a variety of points of scriptural interpretation. And we have insisted that Clement plays a particular role in helping Methodius to recast Irenaeus' scheme in the light of the notion that the divine economy includes the progressive release of the soul from the domination of the passions.

In the sections that follow, we shall be particularly concerned with examining the evidence of the use of Irenaeus and Clement in detail. In the nature of things, however, as we go along it will be impossible not to notice Methodius' recurrent reliance on Origen, both for scriptural interpretation and for specific elements in the development of his view of the plan of salvation. Nevertheless, because of the im-

portance of Methodius' later criticism of Origen, it seems best to devote a subsequent chapter to the dependence on Origen in this work. In more than one instance, we shall eventually see that Methodius later chose to "correct" views of Origen that he embraced here.

The Divine Economy:
Discourses I–III

The first three discourses of the *Symposium* locate the discussion of the life of chastity (παρθενία) within the divine economy of salvation. By means of a carefully contrived disagreement between the first two speakers, which is then mediated by a third, the central features of Methodius' view of that plan are set forth in a fashion that contributes an air of realism to the discussion but also brings to the fore the principal issues in contemporary dispute regarding the goodness of the body and the place of procreation in forming the perfect number of humanity. The view initially introduced here is taken up again in the final discourses (IX–X), where the culmination of the divine economy is considered.

It need scarcely be said that the debate portrayed here makes it impossible to read these discourses without reference to Methodius' literary style, and that it is dangerous to excerpt passages from them as if they contained his teaching in the style of a theological exposition.

Discourse I

In the first discourse, Marcella, after insisting on the strenuous effort required of those who seek true chastity through the cultivation of virtue and the study of the Scriptures (I.1),[10] mentions the long time that God required to win souls from desire or lust (ἐπιθυμία) before he could introduce chastity in the divine economy. "Since at first humanity was few, it was necessary that it first be increased in number and then brought to perfection," so that only "when the earth was filled to overflowing" were human beings trained, "as fathers

[10] Note the relation of this point to the arduous ascent required to reach the mountain retreat of Arete (*Symp.* praef.).

train their unruly children," toward the perfection of chastity. Thus they were first taught to avoid incest, and subsequently "to give up practicing polygamy like young animals," and "then to avoid fornication, and so to advance to continence (ἀρχιπάρθενος]" (4.23).

By way of recapitulation, Marcella observes that while humanity was at first "made according to the image of God," it had yet to receive what was "according to the likeness," namely, chastity, and that this was what the Word was sent to accomplish (4.24). It is those in whom the "likeness" is manifest who are described in Revelation 14:1–5 as the 144,000 chaste ones "who follow the Lord wherever he goes," as distinct from the multitude who do not (5).

The discourse already tells us something about the sources on which Methodius draws for his view of the divine economy. While the reiterated theme of the increase of humankind to perfection is Irenaean in its scope and its language, the treatment of the first human beings as young animals, of the movement of humanity from "image" to "likeness" as a process of the freeing of souls from their irrational impulses, and the details of the stages of their progress toward perfection reflect Clement's reworking of Irenaeus' view.[11] Further aspects of this reworking will appear in later discourses.

For the moment, however, it is important to notice the care with

[11] There is no doubt that Methodius had Irenaeus specifically in view in the discussion of the slow bringing of humanity to perfection in the "image and likeness" of God. See particularly the verbal similarities between *Symp.* I.2,4 and *AH* IV.38.2–3. But in the same passages there is also a clear reference to Clement's elaboration of Irenaeus' notion of Adam as a child into a picture of the first humans as young animals in need of being trained to overcome the passions by spiritual discipline in order to attain the divine life; see *Paed.* I.5.16, 13.101–3; and also see Clement's reference to "some of our [writers]" who have distinguished the original creation "according to the image" from subsequent perfection "according to the likeness." The reference is clearly to Irenaeus' distinction of image and likeness (see *AH* V.5.1, 15.2; cf. *Dem.* 11). Methodius, in fact, relates Irenaeus and Clement on the basis of a conflation of themes already begun by Clement himself. See above, Introduction, note 13; see also below, note 30, on the relation of image and likeness in *Symp.* VI.1.

which the discourse is constructed to make Marcella appear to say that the need for the numerical increase of humankind has reached its end with the coming of Christ, the ἀρχιπάρθενος, so that only those who now embrace chastity are truly his disciples.

Discourse II

The second discourse, of Theophila, thus begins with a passionate defense of marriage on the basis of the continuing validity of the command to "increase and multiply" (Gn. 1:28) in order to produce "the predetermined number of human beings," and thus to "cooperate in forming the image of God. " As hinted at in the account of the ecstatic sleep of Adam at the creation of Eve, she insists, the disruption of the bodily harmony that attends intercourse is still required for the creation of a new human being (II.1–3).

At this point (4), the first speaker intervenes to ask whether the divine purpose is served by illegitimate births, and the second speaker replies with a vivid account of the goodness of the process of procreation even in such circumstances. "Nothing," she declares, "is to be considered evil in itself but rather becomes such by the act of those who use it." Thus "the fleshly garment of the soul" is in all circumstances created according to the divine purpose. She adds that, in any case, no one can reasonably think that "the being of the soul is also sown together with the mortal body" (5.41). She then concludes with scriptural arguments to show that, notwithstanding the superiority of chastity, marriage is not evil: "To some, but not to all, it is given to anticipate the life of the kingdom, where there will be no marrying nor giving in marriage [Mt. 22:30]" (43–44).

This contrived controversy is of no little importance. Methodius' view of the place of chastity in the Christian life, as it will subsequently be set forth with greater clarity, in fact underlies the views of both speakers. The divine economy embraces both the call to chastity announced by Christ and the completion of fullness of humanity by procreation, in anticipation of the final perfection of both souls and bodies. But the disagreement between the speakers allows the second to present what is virtually a replication of the basic elements of Clement of Alexandria's defense of marriage against what Clement

singles out as its Marcionite, Valentinian, and "encratite" opponents. Thus it is Clement, in particular, who defends the command to "increase and multiply" in order to "cooperate in forming the image of *God" (Paedagogus* II.10), and who repudiates the Marcionite rejection of marriage on the ground that the sending of souls into bodies introduces them into the world of the evil God (*Stromateis* III.3.12–13).[12]

Nor, of course, should the argument of the second speaker regarding the goodness of illegitimate birth be overlooked. Her view that "nothing is to be considered evil by itself, but rather becomes such by the act of those who use it" repeats—and surely repeats rather than anticipates—the language of the argument of the *De libero arbitrio* VIII.3–15 that evil resides in the use of a thing and not in the thing itself. Though reference is not explicitly made at this point, as it will be later, to evil as lying in the "free will" rather than in a material substance, there is no doubt that Methodius has here reintroduced the subject of the earlier work. For him, the issue posed by those who deny the goodness of sexual relations is the question of the nature and origin of evil itself.

[12] See also Clement, *Paed.* I.5.16 and *Strom.* III.9.66–67, XVII.102–3. On the origins of the notion that there is a predetermined number of the elect, see W. C. Van Unnick, "Le Nombre des élus dans la premièr épître de Clément," *Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religiouses* 42 (1962): 237–46. Its emergence as a notion that there is to be a human πλήρωμα, in view of its Valentinian implications. See Origen's caution at *PA* I.8; cf. II.4, 9.1; IV.4.4.

The contrivance of a dispute between the speakers, then, which serves to bring these issues to the fore, is scarcely a mere literary device. It is a way both of providing an important perspective on the wider subject of the work and of engaging the reader with it in a lively—we may imagine a contemporary—fashion.

Discourse III

The stated purpose of the third speaker, Thalia, is to mediate between the views of her predecessors. But her discourse in fact introduces a further set of considerations into the discussion of the relation of the divine economy and the life of chastity. Thus, while lauding Theophila's defense of marriage, she insists that the scriptural account of the creation of Eve, and especially the texts "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh" and "Therefore a man shall leave father and mother and shall cleave to his wife . . ." (Gn. 2:23–24), can be taken too easily simply as a defense of marriage. While it is wrong to disregard the literal sense of Genesis, since it contains "the immutable decrees that govern the constitution of the cosmos . . . until the divine legislator himself decide to reorganize it by a new disposition, and to destroy his first ordinances of nature by a new decree," it is equally important to take this particular account in its spiritual sense, as Paul does in Ephesians 5:28–32 when he sees it as foreshadowing the relation of Christ and the Church (III.1–2).[13]

Thalia then embarks on two extended discussions of subjects suggested by what she has just said. The first deals with the appropriateness of seeing Adam as a foreshadowing of Christ, and adapts the familiar Adam-Christ typology to support a spiritual interpretation of

[13] This digest of III.1–2 is reorganized in what may be a more logical fashion than Thalia's argument itself, though without distorting its meaning. The reference to the importance of the literal meaning of the scriptural text is of course significant for understanding the views of Methodius here and elsewhere, as well as the probable criticism of the *Symp.* mentioned in *De cibis;* see above, Introduction and chap. 1, on the view taken here. Thalia's argument is directed not against Origen but against gnostic, particularly Valentinian, treatments of Genesis which not only deny its literal sense but regard the creation as the dispensation of a Creator who is different from the ultimate God who sends the Savior to introduce a dispensation different from that of the Creator.

the ecstasy of Adam at the creation of Eve. The second returns to Genesis again, and treats the relation of Christ and the Church as foreshadowed in the formation of Eve ("Church") from the "side of Adam" (the "Spirit"). This in turn leads to a consideration of the spiritual meaning of the command to "increase and multiply" as it pertains to the baptismal begetting of Christians, with special reference to the responsibility of those who are trying to attain perfection through chastity toward the generality of Christians.

The third discourse is thus of major importance in dealing with the place of the Incarnation of Christ in the divine economy, of the nature of the Church, and of the life of chastity in relation to both. Perhaps only Thecla's discourse (VIII) is of a similar comprehensiveness.

Adam and Christ

Irenaean themes are once again clearly present in Thalia's explanation (III.4) of the relationship of Adam and Christ. It was appropriate, she insists, almost literally following Irenaeus, that the "first" and "only-begotten" Word should be united to the "first, firstborn, and first-formed" of humanity.[14] In Christ, by taking the "untilled soil" of the Virgin, through the agency of the Spirit, the Word was "united to Adam's flesh." The Word was thus "moistening [Adam's flesh] and remolding it," just as a potter remolds a vessel, "so that it was fixed and hardened" in the womb of the Virgin. Thus, what was defaced and rendered mortal by Adam's sin is perfected and rendered incorruptible in Christ.[15]

It has struck commentators as unusual that Methodius' development of the Adam-Christ typology in this section includes the assertion that "Adam is not only a type and image" of Christ, but that "Christ became the very same thing as Adam [καὶ αὐτὸν γεγονέναι], through the descent of the Word into him" (4.60). A variety of efforts have been made both to defend and to

[14] The list of the references to Christ as "first" is preceded by a reference to him as "oldest of the aeons" (III.4.60) which is doubtless not Irenaean, but equally implies no gnostic view of αἰὼν on Methodius' part; see Musurillo, *ACW*, 198.

[15] See Irenaeus, *AH* III.18.1, 21.10, 22.4 IV.20.4.

contest the notion that Methodius regards Adam as a prior incarnation of the Word.[16] But the clue to Methodius' meaning is to be found when the theme of the Incarnation is enlarged upon by Thalia (III.5), with reference to the parable of the shepherd who leaves the ninetynine sheep on the mountain to go in search of the hundredth that is lost (Mt. 18:12–18; Luke 15:4–5). Here Thalia follows Origen's interpretation when she remarks that Adam was "created incorruptible" so that humankind might enter "the ranks of the even and perfect number of immortal creatures" who "join the antiphon of the angels in praising God." For this reason Christ, "who really was and is, being in the beginning with God and being divine [Jn. 1:1], came down to search for man, who remained to be included in this number . . . and put him on himself and carried him back that he might not again be overwhelmed by the mounting waves and deceptions of pleasure" (6.63–65).[17] And she proceeds to describe humanity as being in a situation between righteousness and unrighteousness, incorruption and corruption, having chosen the latter course, and needing to be brought back to the former in order to attain to spiritual harmony and to the resurrection of the flesh (7).[18]

There is little doubt that Methodius thought of the Incarnation of the Word in Christ as unique. The passage as a.whole makes this clear, and does so specifically when Thalia concludes that Adam is "created anew" in Christ, citing 1 Corinthians 15:22, "in Christ shall all be made alive" (6.66). The language of Christ "becoming the very same thing as Adam," unwary though it may be, comes naturally to mind in view of Methodius' conviction, shared by Clement as well

[16] This was the view of Bonwetsch, *Theologie* 92, followed by E. Mersch, *Le Corps mystique* (Paris: Aubier, 1951), 343–47. Farges, in *Idées,* 126–29 argues on the contrary that Methodius simply thinks that the Incarnation of the Word in Christ is mysteriously an incarnation of the whole of humanity represented in Adam; and he is followed in this view by Musurillo, *ACW*, 197–98.

[17] See Origen, *In Gen. hom.* II.3. Musurillo notes that Thalia's quotation of the parable is closer to that in Luke 15:4–6.

[18] The similarities between this summary view of the human situation and that set forth in *De lib. arbit.* need little comment. The point will be taken up again and developed throughout *Symp.* and restated in *Aglaophon* with particular emphasis on the resurrection of the flesh.

as by Origen, that all rational creatures are related to the Word or Wisdom of God, here expressed by the use of Origen's interpretation of the parable of the hundred sheep as referring to the perfect number of rational creatures of which humanity is part. The conviction is basic to Methodius' view of the perfection for which humanity is intended, and is reflected here in his taking the analogy between Christ and Adam as involving the restoration of humanity, in Christ, to the perfection of the relationship with the Word which Adam, in principle, possessed from the beginning.[19] The version of the AdamChrist typology offered by Thalia is a nice example of the way in which Irenaeus' broad picture of the divine economy is reworked in the light of an Alexandrian view of the perfection of humanity which is to be its final outcome.

Christ and the Church

Thalia now comes (III.8) to the spiritual meaning of the ecstasy of Adam that accompanied the formation of Eve, whom he called "flesh of my flesh, and bone of my bone." She observes that "all that is said of Adam may apply directly to Christ." Thus the Church is formed from the "flesh and bone" of Christ, who came down and slept with her in the ecstasy of his Passion, "dying for her sake that he might 'present her to himself a glorious church' and 'without blemish' [Eph. 5:27, 26], cleansing her in the laver" of baptism "for the reception of that blessed spiritual seed which he sows and plants by secret inspiration in the depths of the soul." "Like a woman," she adds, "the Church conceives of this seed and forms it until the day she bears and nourishes it as virtue" (8.70–71).

Viewed in this same way, the command to "increase and multiply" is fulfilled as the Church grows in numbers "thanks to the intimate union between her and the Word, coming down even now and continuing his ecstasy in the memorial [ἀνάμνησιν] of his Passion. " For the Church could not bring forth believers in baptism "un-

[19] Methodius will later restate this view with greater care in the *Aglaophon* I.35–36; see below, chap. 5, note 22. Reference to Christ as "the very same" may echo Irenaeus, *Dem.* 31ff., but certainly has a different sense in the context of the argument here.

less Christ emptied himself for them also, for their conception of him . . . in the recapitulation [ἀναγεννῶνται] in immortality" (72–73).

One can scarcely miss here the baptismal and eucharistic allusions to the "memorial" of the Passion and the "re-created" life of the "illuminated," with which Thalia lays the foundation for her view of the relation of the ascetic life to the life of the generality of believers. The use of "recapitulation," too, will doubtless strike us as the virtual "signature" for Irenaeus' view of the coming of the Word in Adam's flesh. Methodius may well have intended it to be just that.

Once again, however, the Alexandrian overtones are evident in the stress laid on the baptismal and eucharistic life of the Church as the means for the spiritual growth of Christians. And it is in this vein that Thalia now proceeds to insist that the chaste are the "Church and helpmate of Christ," the virgin of 2 Corinthians 11:2, who receive the "pure and fertile seed of doctrine" and collaborate with Christ in assisting those who are "still imperfect and have only begun their lessons in the way of salvation." These latter are still in need of being formed, "as by mothers in labor," by those who are more perfect (73–75).[20]

[20] Indeed, the whole interpretation of the trance of Adam and the formation of Eve, who is a foreshadowing of the Church, are found in Origen, *C. Cels*. IV.38 (on the trance as allegorical) and VI.47 (on Eve as one flesh with Adam); cf. *PA* IV.3.7 on Eve as foreshadowing the Church. But see also Clement of Alexandria on the Church as mother (*Paed*. I.5.21; cf. I.6.42–43), where the images of Eve and the Virgin are merged in the foreshadowing of the Church; and his discussion of the positive function of the "true gnostics" in the life of the generality of Christians (e.g., *Strom*. VI.9. 52–53, VI.12.30). However, the similarities between Methodius' description of the place of the chaste in the life of the Church and that of Clement's "true gnostics" are far more precise. Clement not only generally counsels the abandonment of marriage as the basis of perfection at *Strom*. VI.12.32 and VII.12.70, but describes the perfect Christians as a "choir," as does Methodius, in reference to the "choir of the virgins" in Discources VII, IX, and passim, and in the elaborate hymn of Thecla with which the work ends. See above, Introduction, note 13.

The rest of Thalia's discourse (III.9–14) is a virtual recapitulation of what has been said about the spiritual meaning of Adam and Eve and about the function of the chaste in the life of the Church. Here we need simply to note its length, its insistence that the command to "increase and multiply" is not a justification for licentiousness, its argument that Christ wants all to struggle for chastity but allows room for those who cannot yet do so (1 Cor. 7:1–9), its detailed suggestions about the problems of remarriage and the like, and its recurrence to the basic issue of the overcoming of the passions that inhibit the soul's path to perfection.[21]

The significance of the third discourse, as a summary statement of Methodius' view of the divine economy in relation to the call to chastity, lies not only in the specific teaching that it sets forth regarding the place of the Incarnation and the Church in the divine economy, but in the evidence it provides, in concert with the first two discourses, of what it is that Methodius is concerned to counter: not only arguments justifying licentiousness but, more to the immediate point, arguments for the abandonment of sexual relations on grounds that undermine belief in the goodness of the creation and the place of the Church in the process toward perfection. In their way of accomplishing both these purposes, these discourses contain little that is extraneous to their purpose, save perhaps for the detailed suggestions about the life of the community mentioned just above.

The Ascetic Life:
Discourses IV–VIII

It is not until the ninth discourse that discussion of the divine economy is explicitly resumed with a consideration of the eschatological perfection of the number of humanity, the reunion of souls

[21] See also such liturgical allusions as that to the fast before the Paschal feast (III.12.83). Indeed, such allusions, though not often cited in this connection, can be urged in support of Methodius having occupied some position as bishop or presbyter in the Church. See above, chap. 1, note 7, as well as Appendix I, "The *De lepra* among Methodius' Writings." I myself think that we are here still short of the organized catechetical system that emerged in the fourth century, and that Methodius should be regarded as an independent Christian teacher in the mode of Clement and of Origen before the latter became a presbyter of Caesarea.

and bodies at the resurrection, and the final restoration of all things. The intervening discourses (IV–VIII), culminating in the victorious discourse of Thecla, are devoted to aspects of the life of chastity. They are set off from the discourses that precede and follow them by two of Musurillo's "interludes," brief exchanges between Eubolion and Gregorion. The first of these interludes concludes the third discourse (III.92–93) and praises Thalia for setting forth the issues at hand; the second follows the eighth discourse (VIII.231–32) and commends Thecla for what she has said. The interludes, while of some literary value in themselves by returning attention to the character of the work as an account of the contest, also indicate shifts of direction within the discourses.

These central discourses are not lacking in reference to the origins of the ascetic life or its eschatological purpose. Indeed, they introduce a variety of considerations having to do with the cause of the present human condition and its intended conquest through the embracing of chastity now called for by Christ. And they also introduce, especially by means of the wealth of allegorical themes of which they treat, the main motifs that will be present in the discussion of the life of perfection to come.

Nevertheless, it seems best to review the progress of these discourses in detail, in order to let the theological issues they introduce emerge in the contexts in which the speakers deal with them.

Discourse IV

The themes of the fourth discourse, of Theopatra, are at once tied to those of the earlier section and anticipate those of the final section. Chastity, she begins (IV.2), is the divine gift that "empowers humankind for restoration to Paradise [τῶν παθῶν] which rush upon them from without, forcing off course the entire ship, which would otherwise be easy to steer" (2.94–96). In these circumstances, the gift of chastity "functions as the means of binding our bodies se-

curely, like vessels, and to moor them in calm waters beyond corruption," so that, caught up by Christ, souls "are not dragged down by the physical and bodily floods" (96–97). She adds that these are the circumstances in which "it has been said that Pharaoh," a type of the evil one, had the male rather than the female children drowned in the river, since the evil one, the ruler of "the Egypt of this world 'from Adam to Moses' [Rom. 5:14], seeks to destroy the rational offspring [the male] and to leave the carnal and sensual [the female] to increase and multiply" (97).

This beginning, which traverses again the subject of the place of the ascetic life in the divine economy, leads to an interpretation of the opening of Psalm 136 (LXX): "Upon the rivers of Babylon, there we sat and wept when we remembered Zion; on the willows in the midst thereof we hung up our instruments." The rivers are the floods of passions that disturb and disorient the soul, while the willows stand for chastity "on which the means of procreation are hung out of the way of incontinence by those who long for Zion" (3.98–99). Those who embrace chastity "sing the Lord's song in a strange land," but truly say "if I forget you, Jerusalem, let my right hand be forgotten, let my tongue cleave to my jaws if I do not remember you, if I do not make Jerusalem the beginning of my joy" (Ps. 135:4). These words have to do with the promises of God to be fulfilled at the resurrection; the text refers not to "a well-known city of Judaea" but to the heavenly city, the "community of those whom God promises to place in the front rank, the 'beginning of his joy,' in the new dispensation, and to bring them clad in an inward light because they have not shed the white garment of virginity, the wedding garment of those who keep the mind [φαντασίαις]" (IV.5.106).

The variety of considerations worth comment here is considerable. The "as has been said," used in relation to Pharaoh as the evil one ruling the "Egypt of this world," is a virtual footnote to the familiar language of Origen, from whom may come also the particular reference to the familiar distinction of the male-rational from the female-sensual offspring of the soul, as well as the insistence that the "Jerusalem" to which we are headed is the final ἀποκατάστασις and

not the physical location in Palestine.[22] More generally, it is hard to miss the Platonic, by no means peculiarly Origenist or Clementine, anthropological or psychological scheme whereby the mind is beclouded with the affections that beset the soul when disturbed by the effects of bodily passion. The outlines of Methodius' formal explanation of the ascetic life, in which the mind is illuminated through the overcoming of disrupting affections and the curtailing of the effects of their disruption, is already clear here and will become clearer in the discourses that follow.

Among other considerations worth comment is the appearance of Methodius' frequent theme of the dangerous character of storms at sea, and of water more generally, as referring to the evils that threaten to engulf or drown the soul. The theme is perhaps related to the appropriation of Clement's image of the Sirens' song of *De libero arbitrio* I.1–4, and is, in any case, to be noted in the musings of the first heterodox protagonist in that work over the awesome power of the waves of the sea (II). It is a recurrent theme which though not peculiar to Methodius himself is worth noticing in respect to its frequent appearance in the writings.[23]

---

[22] For Origen on Pharaoh, particularly with regard to the male and female offspring, see *In Ex. hom.* II.1–2, though the theme of Pharaoh and the "Egypt of this world" is recurrent throughout Origen's writings. Origen is, of course, not the only one to identify the male with rationality and the female with irrationality; this assignment is widespread in philosophical, gnostic, and Christian writings generally; but the application of the distinction to the death of the Hebrew children in Exodus in both Origen and Methodius is notable. K. Aspegren, *The Male Woman* (Upsala: Acta Universitatis Upsalienis, 1990) has made much of the theme of the male as rational and the female as irrational, and has seen it as culminating in Methodius' interpretation of the position of Thecla; see Appendix 2, note 12. Our concern here is simply with the source of Methodius' treatment of Pharaoh, which does not concern her. On the identification of Jerusalem with the heavenly city of the ἀποκατάστασις rather than with the physical Jerusalem, see R. L. Wilken, *The Land Called Holy: Palestine in Christian History and Thought* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1992), 69–78. The fact that Methodius takes a clear position on this point, when the literal and spiritual meanings of the restoration of Jerusalem was a matter of issue, is simply one more among many pieces of evidence indicating his familiarity with Origen's work. The bearing of this point on Methodius' spiritual interpretation of "millenarian" themes will be touched upon later; see below, note 50.

[23] The theme of water as evil appears again in *De sang.,* where the water-leech,

(footnote continued on next page)

More important to the substance of the work, however, is the introduction of a series of allegorical themes that will be enlarged upon by later speakers. Thus, it is here for the first time that we encounter the theme of Jerusalem as the heavenly city, and that we hear of the white garment of virginity, which now stands for the inner light of the mind but will later appear in connection with the virgins waiting for the approach of the bridegroom.[24] As these themes are eventually developed, and others are introduced in succeeding discourses, something of the complex fabric of scriptural images that will embody Methodius' treatment of the final perfection of souls begins to emerge.

Discourse V

In the succeeding discourse, Thallusa introduces yet more themes that will be developed later, as she interprets the prescriptions for the taking of a vow in Numbers 6:1–21, and then moves on to an elaborate treatment of the relation of the wilderness tabernacle (Ex. 30:1–9) to the heavenly Jerusalem.

Thallusa's opening discussion of the taking of a vow has some significance beyond her discourse, even beyond the *Symposium* itself. Initially, she proposes (V.1.109–10) to address the vow regarding those men and women who separate themselves for the Lord (Nm. 6:1–2), which she takes as signifying the vow of chastity. She then refers, in this connection, to the prescriptions given to Abraham regarding offering a heifer, a goat, a ram, a turtledove, and a pigeon (Gn. 1:9): these signify keeping the soul uninjured (as in the case of the heifer), and the reason νοῦν), and

(footnote continued from previous page)

which stands for the passions that impede the soul, is ingested through drinking liquid. See above, chap. 1, *De sanguisuga.* The notion of water as evil is of course characteristic of scriptural texts themselves.

[24] The "white garment" is doubtless another reference to the practice of baptism, as we know it from fourth-century sources, in which those who come naked from the water are clothed with white garments, and become the subjects of catechetical and homiletical comment regarding the new life in Christ.

the senses (αἴσθησιν) which need to be brought to perfection (2. 110–11). The provision that the ram is to be three years old may refer to the Trinity, but may also refer to the three stages of life—youth, maturity, and old age—through which the whole person is to pass, overcoming the turbulence of the passions in preparation for the perfection that will follow upon the coming of old age (112–14).

This spiritual interpretation, with its Platonic and Alexandrian overtones, is an obvious version of Methodius' view of the process by which persons are prepared for perfection by embracing chastity. It may also be true that it is this interpretation of the reference to the heifer that raises the question Methodius' correspondents in *De cibis* have in mind when they ask about the meaning of the heifer, which Methodius answers, in his reply, with emphasis on the resurrection of the flesh.[25]

The treatment of the vow, more particularly of Genesis 1:9, is also important as being our clearest evidence of Methodius' use of the distinction between soul and mind (γισμός). This distinction—and the tripartite anthropology of flesh, soul, and mind to which it belongs—distinguishes Origen's analysis from more general references to soul as including the latter's emotive as well as its rational aspects, frequently used at the time. Indeed, the more general reference to soul is often used, in an unstudied way, by Origen himself, as well as by Methodius.[26] In Methodius' writings,

[25] See above, chap. 1, note 19.

[26] There is no point in rehearsing the history of the philosophical distinction between soul and mind, as distinct from definitions of the soul as having both rational and emotive aspects. Efforts to identify the distinction in contemporary writing as explicitly Platonic rather than Stoic tend to overlook both the eclectic character of the philosophical writing of the period and the general tendency to speak simply of "soul," in common discourse, on all sides. In Christian writings, Irenaeus knows of such a distinction, but generally takes the view that mind (or ἐνανθρώπησις) of the Word (badly referred to as *incarnatio* in Latin ren-

(footnote continued on next page)

the distinction will appear again, at least implicitly, in *Symposium* VI.1. But it is doubtful whether it ever plays the important role in his thought that it does in the thought of Origen. It is, in fact, countered by Methodius' general inclination to view soul simply as the organizing principle of the body; and this inclination becomes explicit and studied in the *Aglaophon.*[27] But it is worth noticing that Methodius here employs the tripartite language for exegetical purposes.

The discourse now proceeds to treat chastity as the greatest of vows, and to enlarge upon its obligations (V.4–6), referring to the tradition that the chaste are "God's unbloody altar" (6. 126), and thence to what Methodius conceives to be the larger significance of scriptural references to the furnishings of the wilderness tabernacle (Ex. 30:1–9). These stand for the inner equipment of the Christian with virtues, and thus teach the importance of the spiritual no less than the physical aspects of the life of chastity (7.128–8.131). In view of the scriptural sayings that "the Law is spiritual" (Rom. 7:14) and contains images of "the good things to come" (Heb. 10:1), we must "remove the veil" spread over the Law (2 Cor. 3:6) in order to lay bare its meaning. When this is done, we can see that the adorning of the tabernacle is commanded as an anticipation of the life of the Church, since "through sensible things" the "image of things divine" is prefigured. The furnishings of the tabernacle are to be interpreted as describing the Christian virtues, with chastity, chief among them, being represented by the golden altar that stands before the veil of the tabernacle (8.131).[28]

(footnote continued from previous page)

derings of Greek terminology of the period) is not used of the relation established between the Word and the λογικός of Christ's being, as might be suggested by *PA* II.6. 1–4. Nevertheless, Origen's view of the relation of the Spirit to the human complex differs from that of Irenaeus with respect to the relation of the mind or spirit and the Holy Spirit. Methodius, on this point, agrees with Origen.

[27] See below, chap. 5, notes 40 and 48.

[28] Holy widows are described as the altar of the church in Polycarp, *Ep. ad Phil.* Musurillo (*ACW* 211) calls attention to the note of J. B. Lightfoot, in *Apostolic Fathers,* vol. 2, pt. 3 (London: 1898), 329. But also see C. Osiek, "The Widow as Altar: The Rise and Fall of a Symbol," in *Second Century* 3 (1983): 159–69, for a comprehensive treatment of the "tradition" and Methodius' reference to it.

This section of the discourse introduces themes that will be of continuing significance. The theme of the wilderness tabernacle will be combined with the treatment of the Feast of Tabernacles in Discourse IX, in the interest of dealing with the preparation of those who will participate in the life of the resurrection. More comprehensively, Hebrews 10:1 (the Law is a "shadow of the good things to come") will be used to ground a distinction between the Law, the Gospel, and final reality. In the latter case, the influence of Origen's interpretation of Hebrews 10:l will be immediately recognized. But we shall see that Origen's influence on Methodius' interpretation of the Feast of Tabernacles, less commonly recognized, is equally profound.[29]

In this discourse, then, a variety of earlier themes are reviewed and amplified, and future themes are introduced. The same will be the case in the discourses that immediately follow.

Discourse VI

Agathe's succeeding discourse opens with a comprehensive picture of the nature of the soul in relation to God, a theme of intrinsic interest in itself as well as one that has further bearing on Methodius' understanding of the life of chastity. In a passage remarkable for its beauty, conciseness, and many subtle implications (VI.1.133–35), Agathe observes that "[w]e all come into this world with an extraordinary beauty that has a relationship and kinship to Wisdom. And then it is that human souls most clearly resemble him who begot and formed [ἀπροσδεές] . . . embracing all things in the orbit

[29] For the importance of Origen's treatment of Hebrews 10:1, it is sufficient to cite *PA* III.6.8, IV.1.6, and IV.2.4,6, though the references to the Law, shadow, and reality recur throughout the writings. On Methodius' use of Origen on the Feast of Tabernacles, see my "Methodius' Millenarianism," as well as the discussion of Discourse IX. Also see below, note 50.

of its power, creating and arranging them [τὸ λογικόν]" and "lust for every soul that is spoused to the Lord." However, she concludes, tying her statement to the imagery of her predecessor, "if anyone will keep this beauty spotless and intact, as when fashioned according to that eternal and intelligible nature of which humanity is the image and expression, then, like some beautiful sacred statue transported from this world to the city of the blessed in heaven, that one will dwell there as within a temple."

We have here the outlines of a consistent teaching on the relation of the soul to God, and of both to the divine Wisdom or Word, which will continue to reveal itself throughout Methodius' writings. The soul, here more carefully designated the "rational element," is begotten in the image of the Wisdom or Word, and thus—in a phrase recurrent in Clement and Origen—"in the image of the image" of God.[30] The relation of Wisdom or Word to God is less clearly stated. But it is the ultimate divine being that is "unbegotten," though the Word is referred to in the familiar phrase as "only-begotten." This pattern, so familiar in Justin, Clement, and Origen, despite the latter's speculations regarding the "eternal begetting" of the Word, will recur in Methodius' thinking, as will the important point that only

[30] The careful distinction of the Word or Wisdom as "in the image," and humanity as "according to the image," in both Clement and Origen, appears in Clement, *Prot.* X.95.4, *Paed.* I.12.98, and *Strom.* V.14.114 and VII.3.16; and in Origen, *In Jn.* II.3 and VI.49; cf. *C. Cels.* V.85 and VI.63, among many other places. See H. Crouzel, *Théologie de l'image de dieu chez Origène* (Paris: Aubier, 1956), and A. J. Hobbel, "The *Imago dei* in the Writings of Origen," *SP* 21 (1989): 300–307. The related question of how Methodius distinguishes creation "according to the likeness" has already been raised implicitly in *Symp.* I.2 and II.1, where the "likeness" is in the perfection of the "image" effected through the formation of the full number of humanity by procreation, and its being trained in the discipline that leads to emancipation from the passions. See above, notes 11 and 12, for the conflation of Irenaean and Clementine elements in these discourses.

the ultimate divine being is without need (ἀπροσδεές). It will be the foundation of Methodius' most notable reflections on the divine nature in relation to the creation, and it will form the basis of his criticism of Origen on the "eternal creation" of the cosmos in the *Xeno*.[31]

The passage, of course, cannot fail to call to mind the remarks of Discourses I and II on what it means to speak of humanity as being made "in the likeness" as well as "in the image" of God. Thus the first discourse speaks, with what is undoubtedly an intentional vagueness, of humanity as having first been created in the "image" and then brought to perfection "according to the likeness" (I.2, 4), where it is the increase of humanity by procreation and its coordinate education toward perfection that is at issue, while the second discourse speaks only of procreation as "cooperation in the formation of the image" (II.1). While neither of these discourses, themselves part of the contrived dispute about procreation already discussed, is necessarily inconsistent with the position now set forth, both have in view the formation of soul and body together. And in any case, the movement described, however vaguely, in the first discourse is from "image" to "likeness." By contrast, the present passage has the rational element alone in view, and may be read as teaching that it originally possessed the likeness, and will do so again when the image is perfected in a fashion not mentioned.

A possible explanation of this seeming inconsistency may lie in the statement here that souls originally existed in the likeness of God

[31] See below, chap. 6, "Eternal Creation." But see also above, chap. 2, note 17. Methodius follows Justin, Clement, and Origen in speaking of the ultimate divine being, the Father, or God, as the sole "uncreated" or "unbegotten" reality. Like them, he then has to define the Word or Wisdom, or Son, as "created" or "begotten" in such a way as to distinguish him from merely "created," and by implication imperfect, things. See below, VIII.9.193, and notes 45 and 46. He is, in popular language, a "subordinationist," though that term obscures the subtle and difficult situation in which it was necessary to distinguish Father and Son in contrast to the views of Sabellius, and seemed reasonable to locate the Word in a "mediatorial" position as the agent of God in forming the cosmos. We will see, in chap. 6, that Methodius' criticism of Origen on the "eternal creation" of the cosmos anticipates Arius' rejection of the closely related notion of the "eternal begetting" of the Word, but that Methodius himself, taking a different approach to the latter question, insists on placing the Word on the divine side of the distinction "God" and "the creation."

in "the outlines of that vision which [God] saw when he fashioned them and gave them an imperishable and immortal form." This is surely an allusion to *Timaeus* 29A, where the creator forms the cosmos according to a preexistent pattern.[32] However, Methodius here appears to have in mind an eschatological vision already present in the mind of God.[33]

As this may be, Methodius seems to follow the Alexandrians more nearly than Irenaeus in focusing on the rational element as being made "according to the image," even though he is clearly also committed to the goodness of and the eventual survival of the body. We shall see that there is here another possible ground for the criticism of the *Symposium* as Origenist, to which reference would later be made in *De cibis:* this may well be one of the points that Methodius sought to clarify in his treatment of man as the image of God in the *Aglaophon.*[34]

To return to the sixth discourse, however, Agathe now turns from the observation that chastity is the means of keeping the beauty of the soul intact to notice that we are enjoined to kindle the "light of chastity in our own flesh as in so many lamps." She then embarks on an interpretation of the parable of the ten virgins (Mt. 25:1–13; cf. Lk. 12:35–36), thus introducing for the first time another of the themes which, like that of the tabernacle, contribute to the treatment of chastity in the later discourses.

For those familiar with Methodius' work thus far, the interpretation of the parable will come to mind before it is even discussed

---

[32] See above, notes 11 and 30, on the distinction of creation "according to the image" and the "likeness." It will be important to note Methodius' use of εἶδοι as qualifying the supremacy of God.

[33] See Philo, Origen, and Gregory of Nyssa. For discussion of the subject in detail, see my "Origen and Methodius on Creation," in R. J. Daly, ed., *Origeniana Quinta* (Louvain: Peeters, 1994), 497–508.

[34] In fact, the notion that Methodius here teaches some form of the preexistence of souls is one that Farges felt obliged to deny in *Idées,* 95–96.

(VI.3.137–43). Of the virgins, five are wise and five are foolish. All are pledged to the same life, but they are wise or foolish depending as to how they succeed or fail in applying the oil of chastity to the five senses of sight, taste, smell, touch, and hearing. The body is a "lamp of five lights . . . that the soul carries as a torch to meet Christ the bridegroom on the day of the resurrection." Thus, just as Leviticus 24:2 (cf. Ex. 27:20) speaks of the oil of the lamp that is left burning "from evening until morning" before the veil of the tabernacle, so the lamp lighted by chastity is to burn "until morning, that is, until the coming of Christ." Then the bridegroom will come, heralded by the trumpet, at which time the saints, with their risen bodies, will be taken up to meet the Lord (1 Thes. 4:15), and will sing the new song of the virgins who form the chorus to which Revelation refers when speaking of the 144,000 who are chaste. The interpretation thus brings together both the theme of the tabernacle and the reference to Revelation from Discourse I, and lays the basis for further references to these scriptural themes in Discourse IX.

Discourse VII

The discourse that Procilla now undertakes is devoted to adding one more scriptural theme, this time from the Song of Songs, to the repertoire. In doing so, it sheds further light on more than one aspect of the thought of the work as a whole.

Invoking the witness of Christ himself, who is taken to be the one who praises virginity in the Song of Songs, the speaker begins (VII.1.149–50) on the Johannine note of Christ's uniqueness as a witness to the work of God in him (Jn. 14:28). In this connection, she refers to the teaching of the "apostles and prophets" regarding the "Son of God existing before the ages [πρὸ τῶν αἰώνων]" and possessing "a divinity above all others . . . ," so that he "who is greater than all others after the Father" should have as witness "the Father who alone is greater than he."

Musurillo is satisfied to speak of this passage as "subordinationist" in its view of the relation of the Son to the Father. But plainly the language of speaking of the "Father alone as greater" than the Son is so frequent in Origen that it is possible to say that it is drawn from

Origen himself. Musurillo also notes that Procilla is indebted to Origen for aspects of the treatment of the Song that follows.[35] In any case, the relation of the Father and the Son here is the same as that implied in the language of the preceding discourse regarding the sole "unbegotten" divine being and the "only-begotten" Wisdom or Word. We have here simply another of the pieces of evidence of Methodius' dependence on Origen—at this point for his teaching on the relationship of the persons of the godhead, to which we shall return in the next chapter.

Procilla's interpretation of the Song of Songs, which now follows, is in fact only superficially similar to that of Origen, who identifies the spouse or bride both with the Church and with the soul. For Methodius, it is chastity that is the "lily among the thorns" (Sg. 2:2), and virgins are included under the figure of the spouse, "who must be betrothed to the bridegroom and call herself by his name,[36] remaining pure and undefiled like a 'sealed garden' whose incorruptible fruit awaits being plucked by the Word who delights in spiritual and not physical beauty." To the virgins in particular is applied the reference to the "one eye" and the "one chain" (Sg. 4:9–12), which wound the bridegroom because they refer to the eye of the mind and to the spiritual adornment of the soul rather than to the body (2. 154–55). The immediate application of the text to the life of chastity is Methodius' own interpretation.

However, as if to qualify the prominence given those who embrace virginity in relation to the generality of Christians, Procilla now (3. 155–58) insists that it should not be thought that only virgins attain to the promises, but that others are included "according to the measure of [their] faith" (Rom. 12:6). The choir of virgins will be first to enter the bridal chamber, since they are like martyrs and struggle in a spiritual Olympiad. But others also will attain to the promises, as

---

[35] Musurillo, *ACW*, 216. On the subject of "subordinationism," see above, note 31.

[36] The reference to bearing the "name" of Christ is doubtless another of Methodius' allusions to baptism, as at Matthew 28:19 and many other places (e.g., Justin, *Apol.* 61ff.). See above "Christ and the Church" on baptismal allusions in Discourse III; cf. Origen, *In Cant.* I.5.

the Song of Songs says when it refers to the "sixty queens, eighty concubines, and maidens without number" (6:8), even though it continues by saying (6:9) that "one is my dove, my perfect one; she is the only one of her mother, the chosen of her that bore her."

The extended interpretation of this passage that follows (VII.4–9) takes the sixty queens to refer to the righteous who lived before the Deluge (six from Seth to Noah are named) and retained some knowledge of the fashioning of creation, life in Paradise, and the subsequent history of humanity's succumbing to the waves of the passions. The eighty concubines are the prophets in whom were planted the spiritual seed that is the knowledge of the Incarnation of Christ in anticipation of the final resurrection on the eighth day. And the maidens without number are the righteous of every age. The "perfect one," however, is the Church, to whom the Word is married, to "receive the divine seed and to proclaim the circumcision of the spiritual eighth day." Again, the bride is the "undefiled flesh of the Lord, for the sake of which he left the heavenly father and came down to earth, to which he was united, and upon which, becoming incarnate, he descended . . . and this flesh was deemed worthy to share in the kingdom of the only-begotten, being espoused and united to him." The virgins, Procilla concludes, with reference to Psalm 44:9, are those who will enter the heavenly places as the "golden gown" of the queen, when she takes her place at the "right hand" of the king. But the fact is that "the Church has many daughters," though only one, the company of virgins, is "most precious and honored."

This interpretation is far from insignificant. We have already suggested that the questions to which Methodius responds in the *De cibis* may just possibly have arisen from his correspondents' reading of the *Symposium,* to whose criticism he refers at the outset of that work.[37] If so, it may well be that Methodius' discussion, in the *De cibis* VIII, of "ivory palaces," in which the perfect are said to dwell, as being literally unclean, according to the Law, but as standing spiritually for the bodies of the resurrection, is once again an instance of his responding to issues indirectly raised by the reading of the *Symposium.*

[37] See above, note 25.

That question aside, however, the reference to the resurrection on the spiritual eighth day has some bearing, if not an altogether clear one, on Methodius' revision of millenarian themes in Discourse IX.[38] But more generally, and doubtless more significantly for understanding Methodius' view of chastity, this passage is another of his efforts to place those who embrace chastity in relation to the generality of believers. It suggests yet again that there is a relation between Methodius' concern in this regard and Clement's effort to relate the "true gnostic" to the life of the Church at large.[39]

Discourse VIII

Procilla is now followed by Thecla, whose eventually winning discourse plays the same general role that Discourse III plays at the end of the earlier set of discourses. It is a broad rehearsal of the great themes of the Incarnation, the Church, and the ascetic life, as they have now been prepared for in the immediately preceding discourses. The fact that Thecla is a martyr, and of some importance to those for whom Methodius writes, is indicated by her honorific exchange with Arete before the commencement of her discourse (VIII.praef. 168), as well as by the remarks of Eubolion and Gregorion—in the second of Musurillo's "interludes"—that follow the discourse (VIII.231–32) and marks this section off from that which follows.

In view of Methodius' several purposes, it is perhaps to be expected that Thecla is assigned the discourse that most particularly touches not only on the great themes of the whole work, but on the issues in dispute in the discussion of the relation of chastity to the life of the Church.

Thecla opens with an extended introduction that asserts the divine

---

[38] See my article on "Methodius' Millenarianism" and note 50, below.

[39] See above, note 20, and Introduction, note 13. Musurillo thinks, with some justification, that V.6.163, on the relation of the virgins to those who are baptized, is an unfinished, or at least an unedited, passage, precisely because it obscures the relation of the virgins to the general believers; see *ACW,* 218. He does not repeat the conjecture in *SC,* 192. In any case, the fundamental tension on this point is within Methodius' thought itself. Like Clement, he wants to celebrate those who reach perfection without rejecting those who do not.

character of virginity, playing on the words σωφροσύνη) to the full, rather than letting them droop toward the "corruption of the body." Only by neglecting the virtues, she continues, will one remain "outside the mysteries, uninitiated into the drama of truth" (1.172–73). This passage is fully worthy of Methodius, with its return to the Homeric theme and its reference to the wings of the soul from Plato's *Phaedrus* 246E–49C, as well as to the theme of classical drama, which for contemporary Christians involved narrations of the evil work of the pagan deities.

But, in fact, the discourse has a second introduction (2.173–74). Here Thecla refers to her own death when she says that those "condemned and punished by fire or beasts" despise physical pain because of their love of the life beyond this one. She here borrows from the Myth of the Cave in the *Republic* 514AC to describe that world, of which we now have only ghostly shadows because there is here "no true image but only faint copies" of true beauty, justice, understanding, and peace.[40] The trees and flowers of that world, she says, are those of the Paradise that was entrusted to Adam to cultivate. She ends with a reference to these things as existing in a "special way, in a place" which Jeremiah (Bar. 3:14) mentions when he asks "who has found out [Wisdom's] place or has gone into its treasures?"

This passage is important because it gives us further insight into Methodius' notion of the subtle relationship between our present knowledge of the perceptible world and the true spiritual world where our destiny lies. It thus stands alongside the opening of Discourse VI, with its description of our rational nature as created "in the image of

[40] This particular Platonic reference has not, to my knowledge, been noted by other commentators. I am indebted to the Rev. Dr. Anthony Meredith, S.J., then of Campion Hall, Oxford, whose interest in the Christian use of the Myth of the Cave stimulated my recollection of this passage during a discussion at the time of the Eleventh International Conference on Patristic Studies, Oxford 1991.

the [divine] image" which is the Word (VI.1), and its allusion to the distance between that Word and the ultimate divine, as evidence of Methodius' reflection on the mysteriousness of the final reality toward which we are being led in the process of perfection. We shall shortly have other evidence of the results of this reflection as they relate to the final perfection of the human condition. At present, it is simply worth noting that, as with other seemingly rhetorical passages in Methodius' writings—such as the opening speech of the first heterodox protagonist of the *De libero arbitrio* and the final exhortation of that work—there is every reason to pay attention to what may at first seem to be irrelevancies in the writings.

The substantial body of Thecla's discourse, which now follows (4.181ff.), takes the form of an interpretation of the description in Revelation 12:1–6 of the woman who bore a male child, a son who was taken up to God and his throne out of reach of the red dragon, while the woman fled into the wilderness, to a place prepared for her, and was fed there for 1260 days.

It is no easy task to give even a digest of this exegetical passage, though such is the task that we have set ourselves in view of our conviction regarding the appropriate reading of Methodius' writings. Suffice it to say that the woman, described as clothed with the sun, crowned with twelve stars, and having the moon as her footstool, is the Church (5–6), which is elsewhere referred to in the Scriptures as Jerusalem, the bride, and the temple or tabernacle of God, "whose children by baptism will run to her side at the resurrection." Her brilliant clothing is the brightness of the Word. The moon is the faith of those who have been purified by the tepid (νεοφώτιστοι), and so remain until "the full glory and light of the great day appears."

It is interesting to note that Methodius might have had in mind the Valentinian distinctions between the various sorts of human beings—physical, psychic, and spiritual (πνευματικοί)—when he argues that the function of the Church is to make those who are "psychic," as all humanity is, into "pneumatic" persons, thus denying the notion that only some are naturally "pneumatic," and that only an imperfect form of redemption is open to those who are naturally "psychic." Whether this reference is justification for thinking that his opponents have been Valentinian all along may still be doubted in view of the fact that this is the first reference to something like obvious Valentinian teaching. Nor is it clear that the distinctions of various sorts of human beings are at this point to be taken as specifically Valentinian in reference. But the passage does at least show that Methodius is here concerned to stress that it is the task of those who are advanced in the Christian life to bring others to perfection, and thus to lay stress on the centrality of baptism and participation in the life of the Church.[41]

To return to the discourse, there follows an extended discussion of Christology and baptism (VIII.7–10), which we shall reserve for separate treatment shortly. In the end, the interpretation of the passage from Revelation is resumed and brought to a conclusion (VIII.11–13). The dragon that seeks to destroy the woman's son is "the devil who lies in ambush to abuse the mind of the illuminated faithful and to destroy the clear image and representation of the Word that is created in them." The child is taken up into the heavens, while the woman is taken away into the wilderness for 1260 days. This wilderness, described as a fruitful place in language not unreminiscent of Methodius' descriptions of Paradise, is a wilderness only in the sense

[41] On the continuing problem of Methodius' opposition, see chap. 2, notes 2, 3, and 38. The small question of whether the reference to "tepid" water shows precise familiarity with baptismal practice is one that would only occur to a person aware of the use of warm water in the baptismal practice of Western medieval times. Whether the use of the word here has any precise reference to liturgical practice may be doubted. It is the moon in comparison with the sun that is the point of the reference, and the word is used in that connection. Nonetheless, the passage as a whole, with its probable reference to the newly baptized as clothed with white garments, is another of those that show Methodius' familiarity with initiatory practice in some detail.

of being barren of corruption. The 1260 days refer to the perfect knowledge of the Father, Son, and Spirit[42] on which the woman subsists until the "restoration [ἐποπτεύσις) (11.199). The Church as here described is plainly the company of the perfect, though it is not explicitly identified with the chaste alone nor even with the whole of the heavenly assembly, however vaguely described. Its members "will receive minds free from all compulsion in the choice of the best, so that they are not slaves to fate or to the whims of fortune."[43] Each one will be not merely human, "but . . . good and blessed in following the human example of Christ and modeling on him and living in imitation of him" (13.208).

As we have already said, much is omitted in this digest. We have, however, laid stress on two points that are particularly worth noticing in the context of the rest of the work. The first is Methodius' obvious effort to relate the life of the chaste to that of a wider body of believers. The second is his continued focus on perfection as involving a relation with the divine that goes beyond knowing in the usual sense (ἐπιστήμη), and in this particular case is tied to the discovery of life "free from all compulsion in the choice of the best"—the theme of the free will in its most basic sense—as the ground of communion

[42] The point of the numerological calculation has been shown many times, as in Musurillo, ACW, 224–25, but most clearly, for the amateur, in Farges, *Idées,* 71–72. Crudely put, 1000 stands for the Father (100 × 10) since it contains the full and perfect number, and the Father "rules and governs all things." The number 200 stands for the Spirit, since it consists of the sum of two perfect numbers and "it is through the Holy Spirit that we have knowledge of the Father and the Son," while 60 stands for the Son because "the number six is composed of its own proper parts, and is complete in itself, as the Son in 'emptying himself and taking the form of a slave' was [yet] restored to the fullness of his perfection and dignity." Methodius' numerological interest is evident here. Less commonly noticed, though, are the differing ranks in which the persons of the Godhead are placed, and their correspondence with Methodius' references to the relation of Father and Son in *Symp.* VI.1 and VII.1; see above, note 31.

[43] Musurillo rightly shows that there is a break in the text at this point (VIII.13.208); see *SC,* 235. Nonetheless, the gist of the argument remains clear.

with the divine. The fact that this point is here related to the imitation of Christ, the incarnate Word, is clearly another Alexandrian, and even Origenist, note, to be added to the growing collection of such bits of evidence for Methodius' sources as the work provides.[44]

We have already referred to the discussion of Christ and baptism, which intervenes in the midst of Thecla's interpretation of the wilderness sojourn of the woman in Revelation, as needing special attention; and we have yet to treat the extended criticism of determinism and astrology, which constitutes an unusually discursive and academic appendix to the discourse. Mention of both will bring consideration of this discourse to a close.

Christ and Baptism

In interpreting the figure of the male child born of the woman and taken up to heaven (VIII.7.188–90), Thecla is at pains to oppose the notion that the child is Christ, and does so in terms that suggest that the question is a matter of current debate. "The incarnation [νήθη] precisely that he might remain and check the assaults of the devil on the flesh" (189).

But this is not the end of the matter. At the conclusion of her interpretation of the "male child" as standing for the body of Christians made children through baptism, Thecla introduces a careful discussion (9.193) of God the Father's saying at the baptism of Christ, "You are my Son, this day have I begotten [ἀορίστως καὶ ἀχρόνως]," and thus says "you are my Son," not "you have become." Thus, she concludes, the text teaches that "Christ who had existed 'before the ages'

[44] See Crouzel, *Théologie de l'image de dieu chez Origène,* among many other studies.

[κόσμῳ γεννῆσαι]": that is, that "what was previously unknown should now be made known." To this she adds an interpretation of the "red dragon" who "sweeps down the third part of the stars" (Rev. 12:4) as the heretics who blaspheme the Trinity, naming Sabellius, Artemas, and the Ebionites as respectively blaspheming Father, Son, and Spirit, and adding Marcion, Valentinus, Elkasios, and their disciples as well (10. 197).

Musurillo, noting the seemingly intrusive character of this discussion in the progress of the argument, suggests that it is a later "orthodox" interpolation.[45] But it seems more plausible that the discussion is the result of Methodius' own editing of the discourse to include matters of immediate interest to him, as well as directly relevant to his subject. For one thing, the discussion of Christ as existing "before the ages" may well be a clarification of the earlier vague reference to Christ's being "conceived long before." The teaching developed here is scarcely "orthodox" by later standards. Its effort to distinguish the "begetting" of the Word from the Incarnation is similar to that insisted on by Clement and Origen, while the actual reference to the Trinity employs a term whose use was popularized by Origen. The passage does not, however, speak to the question of the "begetting" of the Word as such, and if anything repeats or is at least consistent with the description of the Word, already encountered in Discourse VII.1, as being "greater than all things other than the Father, who alone is greater than he."

Perhaps even more persuasive against Musurillo's interpretation is the little-noticed similarity between Methodius' view and the argument of Clement of Alexandria (*Paedagogus* I.6.25) against gnostic views of the baptism of Jesus as coincidental with the formation of the Savior. Clement takes up this argument in connection with his insistence that baptism rather than knowledge is the basis of our relationship with Christ, and introduces it with a discussion of the prior begetting of the Word that employs the same reference to the baptismal narrative, with its proclamation "You are my son, today have

[45] Musurillo, *ACW,* 223–24; cf. *SC,* 227, note 1.

I begotten you" (Lk. 3:22; var., cf. Ps. 27) as that employed by Methodius.[46] Looked at in this way, Methodius' editing of Discourse VIII, if such it is, is not only another instance of his use of Clement but serves to emphasize their common point that baptism into Christ, who is in his own baptism "begotten for the world," is the sole and sufficient ground of the Christian life.

Assuming this solution of the problem, this discussion of Christ and baptism serves once again, as in Discourse II on marriage and procreation, as evidence of Methodius' sharing Clement's concern to refute gnostic treatments of the life of perfection. More clearly than the earlier mention in this dialogue of the relation of the *psychics* and the *pneumatics* as referring to stages in the development of the same persons (6.187), it suggests that he at least has in mind the opponents whom Clement designates, certainly Marcion but here especially Valentinus.

Fate, Determinism, and Astrology

The extended treatment of fate, determinism, and astrology that now follows (VIII.14–16) serves as something of an appendix to the discourse. It is sparked by Thecla's assertion that Christians "have received minds independent of all compulsion . . . and are not slaves to fate or to the whims of fortune" (13.208), with its attendant allusion to the pernicious influence of charlatans and astrologers (209). But it is Arete herself (210) who now gives Thecla permission to refute in more detail those who "dispute our statement that humanity has free will" (209–10). The exchange between the two may be no more than a conventional literary device used to break up a lengthy presentation.

---

[46] I have dealt in more detail with the various aspects of this subject in my "The Creation of the Word in Methodius' *Symposium*," *SP* 9 (1966): 240–50. The citation of Psalms 2:7 in connection with the baptismal narrative appears in the Western text of Luke 3:22 (D it codd.). But it is also common in the writing of the time, as in Justin, *Dial.* 130, and notably for our purposes in Clement, *Paed.* I.6.25. Methodius' interpretation of the meaning of "today," moreover, is strikingly similar to Origen's treatment of Psalms 2:7 at *In Jn.* I.29, where it is argued that, since it is always "today" with God, the Son is begotten in that "today." Whatever Gospel text Methodius may have had in mind, it is the similarity of context with Clement, and the use of Origen's treatment of the Psalm verse, that are of primary interest.

But it may also be a means of highlighting the prominence Methodius wants to give to the subject.

The discussion that follows, and of which we here provide only the briefest digest, develops the absurdity of the notion that our lives are governed by the revolutions of the stars. Thecla casts doubt on the claims of astrologers to have scientific knowledge of the way our lives are governed, and draws attention to the evil influence that they have on those who believe them (14–15). The positive side of the discussion, however, consists in Thecla's making substantially the same argument as that of the *De libero arbitrio,* that it is an error to seek explanations of human evils other than the "free will" (τὸ αὐτεξούσιον). God is not the cause of evils, and there is also no unescapable fate or fortune that explains the evils that we do. The solution to the problem of evil is to be sought in the temperance that leads to righteousness and the bringing forth of our higher nature (16). Thecla concludes on the note that there are "two motions" in us, one toward the lust of the flesh and the other toward the perfection of the soul in virtue, and that we should choose the better and not the more base (17).

We have already suggested that this argument, like the earlier reference to the Sirens' song (VIII.1.171), shows that it is a digest rather than an anticipation of the argument of the *De libero arbitrio.*[47] Indeed, it is hard to believe that the concise statement of the argument for the "free will" here can be other than a digest of what had been written before.

It is worth noting, however, that this passage also includes developments of the earlier argument, at least insofar as it ties it together with the issues of the present work. Specifically, the assertion of the "free will" is here related to the issue of Christian asceticism, and sets out clearly the opponents against whom the argument for the "free will" is now made. Had such considerations been in mind at the time of the writing of the *De libero arbitrio,* it is hard to imagine that they

[47] See chap. 2, note 38. Note the repetition here of the theme of the "two motions," earlier introduced by reference to the image of the two directions of the wings of the soul (*Symp.* VIII.1.172–73; cf. *Phaedrus* 246E, 248C, 249C).

would not have been alluded to more clearly there. It is perhaps likely that it is here that we have our clearest evidence of the way in which the theme of the earlier work came to inform and give emphasis to the issues underlying the *Symposium.* But that possibility aside, the reintroduction of the theme here serves to round out the argument of this discourse by supporting the life of chastity against the variety of views that consider embodied life to be evil, or at least under the domination of powers other than God and beyond our control.[48]

Discourse VIII in Retrospect

It is not hard to see that Discourse VIII occupies the same general position in this section of the *Symposium* as does Discourse III in the earlier section. In each case, Methodius brings together a wide range of subjects connecting the life of chastity to related themes of Christian faith. In this case attention is more directly focused on the specific issues of Christology, the relation of the chaste to the baptismal and eucharistic community, and the particular dangers posed by those who reject Christian teaching regarding the divine nature and human responsibility for evil.

We must wonder—and will continue to do so—whether the ascription of this part of the discussion to Thecla was an effort to enlist the support of a legendary figure, whose story was revered by those who might be thought susceptible to the understanding of "continence" (ἐγκράτεια) which Methodius associated with the views that he is here concerned to oppose. This will be a matter of wonder once again when we consider the hymn of Thecla, with which the whole report of the contest among the speakers concludes (284–92). For the time being, however, it must suffice to notice that the treatment of the figure of the woman in *Revelation* 12:1–6, in which she is iden-

[48] The arguments here put forward against astral determinism perhaps have their closest parallels with Alexander of Aphrodisias, *De fato,* though they are so condensed and independently stated as to make specific parallels difficult to establish. On the possibility of Methodius' knowledge of such arguments, see above, chap. 2, notes 27 and 38. See especially note 38 with respect to my willing concession that Methodius here has contemporary views of fate in mind, though I still doubt the presence of such views behind the argument of *De lib. arbit.* See above, chap. 2, note 38.

tified with the Church as it lives in anticipation of the fulfillment of the plan of God, points naturally to the treatment of the consummation of the divine economy in the final discourses, which now follows.

The Final Discourses and Conclusion

Thecla's discourse is followed by the second "interlude," in which Eubolion and Gregorion praise Thecla, but which also marks off the preceding series of discourses from those that follow. Of these last discourses, Discourse IX stands in a place by itself because it brings together the scriptural discussion of the completion of the divine economy of salvation, already anticipated in Discourses I–III, with a treatment of the consummation of all things (ἀποκατάστασις). Since the subject is one that contemplates far more than the return of creation to its situation before the disobedience of Adam, it is better to speak of its subject as the "consummation" rather than as the "restoration" of all things.[49]

Discourse IX—
The Consummation of All Things

The discussion on which this speaker, Tusiane, now embarks is based on an interpretation of the eight days of the Feast of Tabernacles in Leviticus 23:39–43. According to this interpretation, the passage in Leviticus is meant to teach the resurrection of bodies on the seventh cosmic day and their attainment of perfection thereafter. We will eventually to be told that, if we adorn the tabernacles of our bodies with the virtues, chastity chief among them, we will be participants in these final events.

---

[49] The familiar term ἀποκατάστασις can mean either a "consummation" or a "return." As commonly associated with Origen's notion of the return of rational natures to their original unity, it has perhaps naturally come to be thought of as suggesting a return to the *status quo ante.* For evidence that this is not by any means the case, see J. Daniélou, "L'Apocatastase chez saint Grégoire de Nysse," *Rècherches des sciences religieuses* 30 (1940): 328–47. That Methodius used the term in a way that anticipates that of Gregory of Nyssa is a point that will be considered in the discussion of Methodius' influence on Gregory in chap. 5.

The elaborate treatment of the Feast of Tabernacles that now begins is commonly recognized as the first known evidence of Christian use of Jewish millenarian interpretations of the feast. In these interpretations, the Genesis account of the seven days of creation, taken as seven millennia of cosmic history, is conflated with the provisions of Leviticus for the seventh-month harvest festival of seven days concluding on an eighth Sabbath day. The result is scriptural confirmation of a cosmic scheme of eight ages, including a seventh millennium—to be marked by the resurrection and the reign of the saints in a remade heaven and earth—before the final resurrection and judgment of all on the eighth day. Tusiane's reliance on elements of this scheme is clear throughout the discourse, though we shall be at pains to show that Methodius has manifestly reworked the scheme to make it a vehicle for his own view of the divine economy, with its outcome in the spiritual perfection of the creation, which we have already seen unfold in the work and which is very different from the Jewish interpretation. The common notion that Methodius is an adherent of a millenarian tradition is quite misleading.[50]

[50] On the Christian use of Jewish millenarian interpretations of the Feast of Tabernacles, including reference to its use by Methodius, see J. Daniélou, "La Fête des Tabernacles dans l'exegèse patristique," *SP* 1 (1951): 262–79; cf. his "La Typologie de la semaine dans le christianisme primitif," *Vigiliae Christianae* 2 (1948): 1–16, and his *Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture* (London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1973), 289–300. Questions about Methodius' adherence to the tradition are usefully treated in C. Mazzucco, "Il millenarismo di Metodio di Olimpo di fronte a Origene: Polemica o continuita?," *Augustinianum* 26 (1986): 73–87, though Mazzucco himself concludes that Methodius adhered to aspects of the tradition in reaction to Origen's rejection of it as Jewish, literalist, or congenial only to simple believers. See esp. Charles Hill, *Regnum Caelorum* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), on the origins and early history ofmillenarianism. I am indebted to the Rev. Dr. Anthony Meredith, S.J., for showing me, in the course of the Eleventh International Conference on Patristic Studies, Oxford 1991, a copy of C. R. Helms' *The Apocalypse in the Early Church: Christ, Eschaton, and Millennium* (D. Phil. diss., Oxford University, 1991), which recognizes Methodius' modification of millenarian themes in the interest of an ascetic view of the Christian life. Methodius is the first we are aware of to use the Jewish interpretation of the Feast of Tabernacles. He does not, for instance, make explicit use of the language of Revelation 20:4–6, which Hill in any case doubts is millenarian, though he draws on the work elsewhere, as in the *Symp.* VIII.4–13, for the treatment of the woman in Revelation 12:1–6, and in I.5 for the reference to the 144,000 chaste in Revelation 14:1–4. While Methodius certainly knows of Irenaeus'

(footnote continued on next page)

The New Creation

At first sight, Tusiane presents her subject as a continuation of the theme of the wilderness tabernacle of Discourse V (7–8), making the point that we are taught to adorn our tabernacles with virtues. Now, however, the provisions for the observance of the Feast of Tabernacles (Lv. 23:39–43) are set out in full (IX.1.234–36), and attention shifts to the theme of the setting up of the tabernacles of the feast as foreshadowing the resurrection of bodies, with the Pauline image of the body as a tabernacle (2 Cor. 4:1–4) obviously in mind. Jewish interpreters, Tusiane observes (1.236–39), unaware of the "good things to come" (Heb. 10:1), take the text to refer to the tabernacles that Israel continues to erect and adorn. But, in fact, such structures are mere "shadows" that "foretell the setting up again of our tabernacle, which has collapsed to the earth." When "recovering it again in all its immortality in the seventh millennium," she adds, "we shall celebrate the great feast of the true tabernacle in that new creation when all the fruits of the earth have been harvested and men will no longer beget or be begotten, and God will rest from the work of creation."

Tusiane now pursues the theme of the new creation more comprehensively (1.240–42). Since God created the universe in six days and rested on the seventh, the feast prescribed for the seventh month, when the fruits of the earth have been gathered, prefigures the seventh cosmic day "when God will have finished the cosmos and will rejoice in us." For the present, however, God is "still creating by his omnipotent will and inscrutable power, the earth still yielding its fruit, . . . the number of humanity still growing through procreation. " But "when the days shall be accomplished, and God cease to work in this creation, in that seventh month, the day of resurrection, then our feast of tabernacles will be celebrated to the Lord."

At this point Tusiane also enlarges on the text of Hebrews 10:1,

(footnote continued from previous page)

view that creation will be brought to its fullness in the six cosmic days that precede the resurrection and judgment, he does not seem to rely on Irenaeus' own modifications of the millenarian tradition (drawn attention to by B. E. Daley, in his *The Hope of the Early Church* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991], 30ff.), though the final outcome of his own modifications is not unlike that of Irenaeus in basic respects.

which says that "the Law has a shadow of the good things to come but not the very image." Israel celebrates "types of the future as though they were types of things already past." But, in fact, "the Law is a shadow and type of the image, that is the Gospel, and the image, the Gospel, represents the truth to be fulfilled at the second coming of Christ." Thus it is that those "who have accepted Christ, who said 'I am the truth' . . . are aware that the shadows and types have come to an end, and press on toward the truth," though "still proclaiming it in images, since 'we know in part' and 'through a glass,' for that which is perfect is not yet come to us, [namely,] the kingdom of heaven and the resurrection, when that which is 'in part' shall be done away" (1 Cor. 13:10–12). She concludes this argument with a further expression of confidence that, as a result of the death of Christ, our bodies will be reunited immovably with their souls, and we shall go forth to celebrate the feast "with our bodies adorned with good works as did the five virgins with [their lamps]" (2.242–43).

It is obvious that what Tusiane has done thus far is to use the description of the Feast of Tabernacles as a framework for a restatement of the view of the divine economy already set forth in the early discourses. This view had emphasized the formation of the perfect number of humanity by procreation and the cessation of the process of coming to be and passing away that will accompany its completion and lead to the restoration of a stable union of souls and bodies. Tusiane has now enlarged upon this view by reference to such themes as those of the wilderness tabernacle and the parable of the ten virgins. She has also employed the familiar distinction, drawn out of Origen (e.g., *De principiis* III.6.8; IV.1.6, 2.4,6, 4.13), between the three meanings of the Scriptures: the Law anticipates the Gospel, which foreshadows the ultimate consummation. Perhaps as important as anything else in her use of this distinction is her treatment of the ultimate consummation (4.13) as beyond our present conception, as that point relates to Methodius' earlier references (*Symposium* VIII.13.208) to the final state of perfection as perceived by intuition (ἐπιστήμη).

At the very least, Methodius' treatment of the millenarian theme has already taken directions that lead it beyond the literal exposition

of the eight cosmic days. And the treatment of the resurrection and the final consummation, which now follow, continues in this same direction.

The Day of Resurrection

With respect to the day of resurrection, Tusiane has already explained that on the feast foreshadowed in Leviticus "our tabernacles will be set up when our bodies rise again, their bones once more fixed and compacted with flesh," and that "we shall celebrate the day in a pure manner, receiving now eternal tabernacles, never more to die or to be dissolved into the earth," since sin, having died with the body, will no longer affect us (2.242–43). She now embarks upon an elaborate treatment of the "branches" of virtue, explaining the true meaning of the branches that are to deck the tabernacle of the feast, and that must be brought to the judgment seat of Christ on the day of the resurrection, the "first day" of the feast (3.243–47). She then goes on to discuss the palm and the willow, which stand for the discipline by which the soul (ἁγνος), which stands for chastity, is the larger and stronger of the two, and thus the one that is above all to be brought before the judgment seat of Christ (4.247–52).[51]

The predominant theme here, although set within the framework of the interpretation of the feast, is that already introduced in the treatment of the wilderness tabernacle in Discourse V. With the restoration of the body, free now from sin, the way will be open for the unimpeded acquisition of virtue and the consequent illumination of the rational element of the soul.[52]

The perplexing thing here, however, is the recurrent reference to

[51] Other references to the willow have already been noted in Discourse IV.1, where Theopatra refers to "hanging up" our bodies free from the "waters of Babylon." Still to come is the description of the *agnos* tree in the garden of Arete, at which the virgins will gather to join Thecla in her hymn at the conclusion of the contest. But see also the reference to an Agnos tree at *De res*. II.23.1–2.

[52] Note here again the distinction of νοῦς, as it occurs in close proximity to reference to the rational nature of the "soul" more generally used of both; see above, note 26.

the "first day" of the feast as the occasion for the appearance of those who are prepared to be judged by Christ, rather than the seventh day of the cosmic scheme, which we would expect according to the millenarian interpretation that Methodius is presumed to be following. Even more perplexing is the fact that, while Tusiane is here referring to the virtues which the resurrection of purified bodies will make possible, the point of her argument, when carefully read (e.g., 4.252), is to encourage the struggle for chastity now, while her hearers are still beset with the lusts of the flesh, in preparation for the judgment to come. Methodius seems here to have abandoned any specific consideration of the millenarian scheme in dealing with the call to chastity as preparation for the perfection to come. And this is even more clearly the case as the final section of the discourse now unfolds.

The Final Consummation

The wilderness tabernacle is once again in view in the treatment of the consummation that will follow upon the resurrection and judgment (5.252–55). The tabernacle of the feast, Tusiane says, is that "to which Israel came from the borders of Egypt" while on the way to the Promised Land. Just so, "making my way from the Egypt of this life, I shall come first to the resurrection, the true setting up of my tabernacle; and setting up my tabernacle with the fruit of virtue on the first day of the risen life, . . . I shall celebrate with Christ the millennium of rest, the seven days as they are called, the true Sabbath" (5.252–54). But then, "following Jesus 'who has passed into the heavens' [Heb. 4:14], I shall arrive in heaven, just as the Jews, after the rest of the tabernacles, came to the Promised Land." For, she continues, "I shall not abide in the tabernacles, that is, the tabernacle of my body will not remain the same, but after the millennium it will be changed from its human appearance and corruption to angelic grandeur and beauty." And she repeats that "after the feast of the resurrection . . . we shall pass from the wondrous place of the tabernacle to the larger and better one, going up to the very house of God above the heavens" (254–55).

Here the perplexities we have already noticed are compounded.

While some reference is made to the millenarian scheme of a seventh day of rest followed by an eighth final day, it is virtually overwhelmed by other considerations. The description of the seventh day that Tusiane offers says nothing about the reign of the saints on earth, but concentrates instead on celebrating the true Sabbath with Christ. Moreover, this Sabbath is succeeded not by the final resurrection and judgment of all, but by following Christ into the heavens. Most perplexing of all is the notion that the tabernacle of the body will be changed from its present form to an angelic appearance, and will perhaps be left behind altogether, although the point is carefully qualified immediately after it is made: "I shall not abide in the tabernacles, *that is, the tabernacle of my body will not remain the same* (ἀπομείναντος τοιούτου)." The significance of the qualification, here underlined, as a probable correction by Methodius at a later time, will be discussed below.

To say that Methodius offers a very peculiar brand of millenarianism is the least that can be said. The millenarian interpretation of the Feast of Tabernacles offered here serves as a mere framework—doubtless of an expansive and striking sort—for the final reworking and restatement of his views about the completion of the plan of salvation in the perfection of souls and bodies that was anticipated in the opening dialogues, and which there provided the background for the discussion of the Christian life and of the call to chastity in the intermediate dialogues. But Methodius' attention is directed now toward the final stages of that perfection as they lead to communion with the divine nature rather than on the details of the millenarian interpretation of the feast.

Nor is this the whole story. As we shall see in treating the *Aglaophon,* Methodius' suggestion here that the final state of perfection involves "passing beyond" the tabernacle of the body was, in all probability, one of the chief points on which the *Symposium* was criticized. Indeed, the *Aglaophon* is at pains to correct any impression that this is, in fact, Methodius' teaching. And it is certainly possible that the careful qualification noted above—"that is, the tabernacle of my body will not remain the same"—is a later editing of the *Sym-*

posium by Methodius himself, initiated in an effort to clarify his views.[53]

Methodius' Sources

Important light is shed on Methodius' handling of the millenarian interpretation of the Feast of Tabernacles by reference to his habitual sources. Irenaeus first comes to mind, both because of Methodius' continuing reliance on him throughout the work and because of Irenaeus' own free adaptation of the millenarian tradition in the interest of his own view of the perfection of humanity.[54] But while Irenaean language may be echoed in Methodius' description of the completion of the creation on the seventh day, Irenaeus is not himself concerned with the interpretation of the feast.

It is thus to Clement of Alexandria and Origen that we must turn. It is from Clement, Methodius' habitual source for issues related to the life of chastity, that he draws much of the detail with which he will work out Irenaeus' scheme of the completion of the predetermined number of humanity by procreation and the cessation of physical coming to be and passing away. But Clement also contains important analogues for Methodius' treatment of the tabernacles, combining an interpretation of the inner equipment of the wilderness tabernacle, as referring to the virtues, with a reference to the Leviticus account of the feast, as referring to a spiritual eighth day when there will be a pure offering of the soul released from the confines of the present age (*Stromateis* IV.25.158–60).

The evidence of Origen is even more striking because of its implicit association of the theme of the tabernacles with the unfolding plan of salvation. For Origen, the wilderness tabernacle foreshadows both the Church and the heavenly tabernacle that Christ has entered, while the palm branches associated with the feast stand for the victory that will be won by souls when they have recovered their angelic purity at the final restoration (*In Ex. hom.* IX. *2.4*). The adornment

---

[53] Though Musurillo does not notice the intrusive character of this qualification, it is as likely to be an editorial adjustment, as is the treatment of the creation of the Word at VIII.9.193. See above, note 46.

[54] See Daley, *Hope of the Early Church,* 30ff.

of the wilderness tabernacle, in Origen's view, refers to the spiritual virtues to be acquired in the journey from Egypt through the wilderness of bodily existence, toward the Promised Land (XIII.1–3).[55]

While neither Clement nor Origen have any room for a "millennium" of even Methodius' highly modified sort, and while Methodius remains the first we know of to offer a millenarian interpretation of the Feast of Tabernacles, it is plainly along the lines suggested by Clement and Origen that his interpretation of the feast becomes a vehicle for discussing the true significance of the restoration of souls to bodies in anticipation of their final perfection.

Discourse X and the Conclusion of the Symposium

At this point a third brief "interlude," in the form of an exchange between Eubolion and Gregorion intervenes, when Eubolion remarks that Domnina, who must be the final speaker, will probably be hesitant to speak now, giving the impression—sustained by the style of the discourse to follow—that she is the youngest or at least the most inexperienced of the ten. Indeed, Gregorion reports that she needed encouragement from Arete to "bring our banquet to a perfect close" (IX.256–57).

If we are to suppose that this interlude, like the others, serves a more than merely literary purpose, we must assume that Discourse X is to be read as the "perfect close," notwithstanding the fact that the concluding remarks of Arete have been seen by modern scholars as a kind of Discourse XI.[56] We ought, then, to look at Discourse X with an eye to its function as the final contribution to the contest, as we shall see that Arete does herself in what we should best call her summary of the whole.

---

[55] While it is always doubtful that Methodius, or any other writer of the time, had all the works of Origen to hand, the *Hom. in Exod.* is particularly in evidence in Discourse IV on the theme of Pharaoh, the Egypt of this world, and the massacre of the innocents; see above, note 22.

[56] Musurillo follows Bonwetsch and Migne (Combefis), though with some hesitation and against the manuscript tradition, in designating the remarks of Arete as Discourse XI (*ACW,* 23 5), but does not repeat his uncertainties, except in a brief note, at *SC,* 304. The point is, however, an important one.

Discourse X and Jotham's Fable

Domnina does indeed take up her task with great hesitation, and claims to be short of breath until she calls upon Wisdom for assistance. Moreover, her speech begins in an unusually simple way. Once Christ "taught virginity, the reign of the evil one has been destroyed, whereas before that time he persistently succeeded in capturing and enslaving humanity." For "none of those of old were fully pleasing to the Lord, but were all overwhelmed by error, since the Law was not at all adequate to free humanity from corruption." Had the Law been adequate, "humanity would not have fallen so often into war and murder, lust, and idolatry." However, when "Christ became human and armed the flesh with the ornament of virginity," the power of incontinence was broken, "peace and faith reign, and human beings are not so much given to idol worship as they were of old" (X.1.257–60). To illustrate the point that the Law was not adequate, she now turns to explore Jotham's fable (Jgs. 9:8–15) for the light it sheds on the human situation, insisting that in doing so she is not indulging in an argument from probability of meaning but from certainty (2.160).[57] The fable may have been chosen for use as being the sort of story of interest to the young, but its interpretation is far from naive.

The basis of Domnina's interpretation of Jotham's fable is clear. It cannot be that the Scriptures have real trees in view when they

[57] This introduction has many aspects of note. The subject of the inadequacy of the Law is an old one, debated between Marcionites, Valentinians, and the orthodox from the second century onward, and needs no comment. But Domnina's "naive" statement of the point, if such it is intended to be, lays the ground for a general discussion of the history of the commandments that will follow. Moreover, the reference to the deceit of the evil one recalls the treatment of the devil in *De lib. arbit.* XVIII more clearly than do allusions to the same point earlier in this work. Perhaps most interesting, the insistence that what follows is an argument based not on probability but on certainty (regarding the meaning of the Scriptures?) again recalls the rules of discussion laid down in *De lib. arbit.* IV, which distinguish between what is rational and what is revealed. Yet here the interpretation of the fable is based on the subtle and debated notion that some passages of the Scriptures have no literal meaning. The notion is mentioned in *Symp.* III.1, and was later to become an issue for Methodius in his criticism of Origen (see *De res.* III.8.3, below). Presumably it is not as yet an issue.

describe the trees coming to ask the olive, the fig, the vine, and the bramble to reign over them, with each refusing except for the bramble. Rather, the trees are the fallen souls who "before the Incarnation of Christ . . . approach God and beseech him . . . in his pity and mercy to reign over them." It is clear that this is an important selection, since the olive is that which provides the oil that can light the lamps of virtue—as in Discourse VI.2 and elsewhere, on the parable of the virgins—and provides "light for the heart" (2.260–63).

Further analysis of the parable, however, shows that the olive, the fig, the vine, and the bramble each stand for a commandment (χιπάρθενος) (2.262–4.266; cf. 5.272). Thus while any of these commandments might have been able to release humanity from the effects of Adam's disobedience, they all refuse to "reign," according to the fable, because the petitioners were not able to overcome the effects of the evil one, who recurrently deceived humanity with physical attractions in the guise of the spiritual promises for which the fig, the vine, and even the olive stand, and "transforming himself into an angel of light, beguiles many with a facade of piety" (5.271). Obviously, it remains for the bramble—chastity—to be that which overcomes the powers of evil, and sets humanity on the way to freedom from their control.[58] The conclusion is inescapable: the fruit of Christ

[58] We can offer here only the gist of a complicated discussion of the value of the fig tree, the vine, and the olive, whose virtues are spelled out with scriptural references to their powers at X.5–6). It seems likely that the effort made here to show the value of the various plants (commandments) is once again in the interest of insisting that these are not evil but provisionally good, and hence that the argument is directed against the Marcionite view of the commandments as the work of a God bent on imposing judgment, and the Valentinian teaching of the uselessness and contradictory character of the earlier commandments (e.g., Ptolemy, *Ep. ad Floram,* but also Irenaeus, *AH* IV.38.1–4 and many other places).

and the Spirit can only be had by those who first purify themselves with chastity, since it "is the discipline which from childhood prepares the soul for glory . . . with ease, and from small efforts raises up mighty hopes, giving immortality to our bodies . . . because [the chaste] have become espoused to the Word . . . and emancipated from the condemnation 'You are dust, and to dust you shall return'" (6.276–78).

If we consider Discourse X as the last of the series, it is clear that this intricate interpretation of Jotham's fable adds further weight to the theme of chastity as a central part of the divine plan of salvation, which Methodius is concerned to stress throughout the work. It is also possible that it is an appeal—with what particular reference we cannot know—not to be fearful of embracing chastity at an early age, since the call to chastity is made to all Christians.[59]

The Speech of Arete

If we take the discourse of Domnina as the "perfect close" of the whole set, the final remarks of Arete, rather than having to be dignified as comprising a separate discourse, take on a new significance of their own, particularly in their stark and unadorned brevity and terseness.

She begins at once by saying that "many think to honor chastity, but few actually do so," since "whoever seeks only to restrain the body from the pleasures of carnal love . . . does not honor chastity but dishonors it, substituting one pleasure for another" (278–79). Thus launched on this theme, she introduces the further qualification that even "those who persevere in resisting the desires of the senses," but "take pride [ὕβρις]" in their accomplishment, "do not honor chastity, but dishonor it, purifying the 'outside of the dish' (Mt. 23:25), that is, the flesh, the body, while doing harm to the heart." Of particular concern here is the self-love reflected in satisfaction with material possessions to the neglect of the needs of others. In this

[59] One is, of course, reminded of the later appeals of Jerome for an early embrace of the ascetic life. But these appeals come from a different age. Suffice it to say that Domnina's discourse, while it may begin with suggestions of her youth and inexperience, is far from being the least subtle and complicated of the collection.

connection, she repeats that "it is not proper to practice chastity and virginity . . . and to remain lacking in continence [σωφροσύνη], or to profess purity and self-control and then to shun continence," or "to say that we are not concerned with worldly things, and then to try to possess them and to become anxious over them" (280–82). She concludes with the image of the tightly built ship, with planks and fittings equally intact. While abandonment of sexual relations is crucial, tongue, sight, ears, and hands must all be kept pure, and the heart must be free of anger or conceit, just as it is important to caulk a ship's timbers lest "sin find an opening and pour in." In fact, those who repress sexual desire but do not restrain their other impulses bring reproach on those who strive for true chastity (282–84).

Methodius gives no clear explanation of the way in which he uses his terminology throughout the work, or of its meaning. ἐγκράτεια. The first, apparently synonymous, terms refer to the control of all the senses, but even more to its fruit in the abandonment of pride and self-love in favor of humility and love for others. The second, while frequently commended, can even be dangerous when viewed as an end in itself.[60]

More important, however, is the bearing of Arete's remarks on the purpose of the whole work. She sets out at once to recommend chastity or virginity as the way to move humanity toward its divinely appointed end, and also to criticize those who, for superficial or even

[60] On Methodius' habitual use of σωφροσύνη, with its less controversial and more philosophical overtones, is part of an effort to fit the "mere" abandonment of sexual relations into a scheme that regards it as a positive step on the way to true chastity. This he does explicitly in *Symp.* 1, but also indirectly both in the remarks of Arete and in the concluding discussion of Eubolion and Gregorion referred to in note 7. The result is at once to commend "continence" and to locate it in a progression of steps by which God has sought to bring souls to perfection, but to see it as one that must be recognized as merely provisional and indeed dangerous if regarded as perfection itself.

serious reasons, regard continence as an end in itself. Seen in this way, Arete's speech is at once less and a great deal more than simply another of the discourses. It states quite clearly where Methodius stands in the real world, rather than the imagined world depicted in the banquet. In this regard, it points toward the final discussion between Eubolion and Gregorion on the importance of the struggle for perfection, which will follow the conclusion of the report of the banquet.[61]

The Hymn of Thecla

Arete's speech leads her directly to the awarding of crowns to all the speakers. But she reserves "the largest and thickest" for Thecla. At that, all "rise from the table" to assemble facing toward the east, at the willow tree in the garden, to join in Thecla's "hymn of thanksgiving [εὐχαριστήριον ὕμνον] to the Lord."

This hymn, to which an appendix in this work is devoted, has received extraordinary scholarly attention. It is an acrostic of twenty-four verses sung by Thecla with a refrain repeated by all. It probably reflects the familiar liturgical practice of having psalms sung by a single voice interspersed with a congregational antiphon. Other literary parallels aside, this model would seem to be obvious and appropriate to the paraliturgical occasion envisioned here, though Musurillo's suggestion that it was composed by Methodius for liturgical use seems to go too far. The hymn seems too contrived to serve an actual liturgical purpose; and it is hard to imagine, granting our limited evidence of the practices of the time, in what circumstances it would occur in a liturgical meeting.[62]

It is the place of the hymn in the *Symposium* that chiefly concerns us here. For instance, the antiphon, "Chastely I live for you, and

---

[61] See above, note 60.

[62] For a fair summary of earlier views of the hymn, at least at the time that he wrote, see Musurillo, *ACW,* 236–39, with its bibliography. Musurillo, *SC,* 310, adds little, though Buchheit, *Studien,* 158–60, has explored more carefully the question of its similarity to other examples of Methodius' efforts at poetry. We do not include here the text of the hymn, which is readily available in Musurillo, ACW, 151–57; SC, 284–92.

holding my lighted lamps, my spouse, I go forth to meet you," combines the images of the wise virgins of the Matthean parable and the bride of the Song of Songs, both of which have come to dominate these discourses describing the purpose of the life of chastity. Similarly, the verses sung by Thecla refer to the chorus of virgins as those who accompany the Church, the bride and queen, as she goes to meet the bridegroom. They describe the importance of true chastity and regret the failures of those who do not achieve it, as well as declare the end of death and corruption and the restoration of humanity to the Paradise from which it was cast out. These are all themes we have frequently met in the discourses.

Peculiar to the verses of the hymn, however, are not only its references to Thecla's life and martyrdom, as recorded in the *Acts of Paul and Thecla,* but also its inclusion of references to others whose lives have anticipated the sacrifices of the chaste, in their struggle for the purity needed for inclusion in the choir of virgins. Here Thecla recounts in personal terms her refusal of marriage, her bravery in the midst of fire and the assaults of wild beasts, and her turning away from "native city, mother, and family" in order to maintain her virginity. Subsequently, she invokes the examples of Abel, Joseph, Jeptha's daughter, Judith, Susanna, John the Baptist, and the Virgin Mary among those who have accepted death and braved calumny in order to join the chorus of those prepared to meet the bridegroom.

The list of exemplars, apart from Thecla herself, is an extraordinary one: it is essentially a list of women who have undergone persecution from men in order to retain their virginity, but it also includes Abel, Joseph, and John the Baptist, who are not easily treated in this connection. One may speculate that Methodius has here taken up an account of Thecla and other women ascetics familiar to his readers, has attempted to give it a broader focus by making reference to males who suffered oppression for the sake of virginity, and has rendered the result in his own poetic style.[63]

It is clear in any case that the hymn as it now stands, with its

[63] For a closer and more speculative treatment of the subject, see Appendix 2, on "The Hymn of Thecla and the Purpose of the *Symposium."*

references to the Church, the bride and queen, going forward to meet the bridegroom, is a final instance of Methodius' concern to say that it is the whole Church, not merely the chaste, or any specific group within the Church committed to continence, that is on the way to perfection in the divine economy of salvation.

The Symposium and Methodius' Theology

We began this chapter by insisting that the *Symposium* is not the compendium of Methodius' theological views that it is commonly taken to be, and that its treatment of most—if not all—of the doctrinal and other themes touched upon specifically serves its recommendation of chastity and its concern to oppose any rejection of sexual relations on the ground that they involve the soul with the evil material world. In this respect, the work incorporates some of the main emphases of the *De libero arbitrio* in the quite different circumstances in which it is written, though it is far clearer here that Methodius' opposition is now Marcionite and Valentinian rather than simply philosophical, as in the earlier work.

Nonetheless, the *Symposium* does tell us much about the general stance of Methodius toward the theological issues of his time. It shows him to be an interpreter of Irenaeus' view of the divine economy in the light of Clement of Alexandria's elaboration of it: Clement provides support, especially, for Methodius' view of the life of chastity and its difference from the mere rejection of sexual relations. In this connection, it shows Methodius to be a firm supporter of the goodness and redeemability of the physical creation, chiefly in the line of Irenaeus but again as elaborated with the help of Clement.

So far as more properly "theological" subjects are concerned, the work shows Methodius to stand quite clearly in the line of thought from Justin Martyr, to Clement, and to Origen. He is particularly in debt to Origen with respect to the relation of the sole "unbegotten" Father to the "begotten" Son, the Wisdom or Word; and in the tradition of both Clement and Origen with regard to the creation of the rational element of human nature "in the image of [the divine] image," the Wisdom or Word. On this latter score, in particular, a cer-

tain ambiguity remains apparent with respect to just what it means to say that humanity is so created. Irenaeus' emphasis on the Word being united to Adam's flesh in Christ makes itself felt not only in Methodius' stress on the salvation of the physical nature but in his emphasis on the life of chastity as preparation for the redemption of both soul and body. This, of course, is in line with Methodius' continuing concern, already evident in *De libero arbitrio,* to insist that matter is not the cause of evil.

We have encountered various particular instances of Methodius' use of Origen, both in his scriptural interpretation and in the substance of his thought. These, with others not yet noticed, will be the subject of particular consideration shortly, both for their intrinsic significance in the formation of Methodius' thought and for their bearing on the criticism made of the *Symposium,* and Methodius' own response to it in his own criticism of Origen.

But Methodius, as we already remarked, is more than the sum of the influences playing upon him. It is in this connection that we have already called attention, in treating the *De libero arbitrio,* to his stress on the created free will as the counter to any qualification of the divine sovereignty. In the *Symposium,* each of these elements reappears in a broader context and with new implications. It is in this work that the stress on the free will is reworked and brought into relation with the notion that the soul is engulfed by the passions because of the physical coming to be and passing away that accompany the creation of the perfect number of humanity in the mortal condition in which it finds itself as a result of the disobedience of Adam. At the same time, the stress on the divine sovereignty is restated and enlarged in view of the divine nature as utterly without need (ἐπιστήμη) to a state of intuitive communion with the incomprehensible.

Further elaboration—or perhaps development—of these themes will occur in the course of Methodius' criticism of Origen. They will not, as we shall see, be worked out simply in opposition to Origen, though they will increasingly center on Methodius' understanding of Origen's views regarding embodiment and the eternal creation of the

cosmos. In some instances, Methodius will work out these themes along lines which, in fact, begin with the very views of Origen he is himself subjecting to criticism. These will, in any case, be the themes that we will consider as we pass from the thought of the *De libero arbitrio* and the *Symposium* to Methodius' treatment of Origen in the *Aglaophon* and the *Xeno.*

4—
Origen in the Symposium

We have already encountered evidence of Methodius' indebtedness to Origen in the *Symposium.* Notwithstanding the constitutive influence of Irenaeus and Clement on his views of the divine economy of salvation and of the place of the ascetic life within it, Methodius' exegetical and theological use of Origen's writings appears throughout the work. If similarities with the views of Origen appear in the earlier *De libero arbitrio,* here there is a reliance on Origen of a far more explicit sort.

It is not surprising, of course, that a person of Methodius' intellectual interests should have known something of Origen's writings, even though we have no knowledge of the former's association with the theological circles of Alexandria, where they were known, or with Caesarea, where they reposed. It is surprising, however, that Methodius, living in Lycia, should be so well acquainted with what seems to have been a considerable body of Origen's writings at an unusually early date. If we assign the creation of Methodius' own writings (as we have) to the period from the 260s to the end of the century—and even this vague dating depends simply on his being known as a critic of Origen in the Pamphilus-Eusebius *Apologia*—it was only shortly after Origen's death about 254 that Methodius must have acquired the familiarity with his work required for the kind of influence we have encountered.

Speculation as to how Methodius acquired his familiarity with

Origen is fruitless. But it is not insignificant that his extensive and specific references to his writings are not so far removed from the Alexandrian in time as they were in space. Did Methodius ever travel very far beyond his Lycian locale? Does the fact that he and at least some of his own writings were known to the authors of the *Apologia* suggest more than a nodding acquaintance with the school of Caesarea? Where in Lycia could Methodius have acquired such a familiarity not only with Origen, but with Irenaeus, Clement, and the many other early Christian writers that he displays? For these questions we have no answers.

What has, in any case, been a matter of recurrent surprise and bemusement is that the man portrayed as the premier critic of Origen should be so clearly indebted to him, particularly in the *Symposium*. It is, after all, in the *Symposium* that the broad themes of the goodness of the physical creation, the importance of human embodiment, and the resurrection of the physical body, on which Methodius would later mount his criticisms of Origen, are set forth in the course of his defense of the life of chastity in relation to that of the generality of Christian believers.

We earlier set forth our own solution to this problem. The letter-treatise *De cibis,* though it needs cautious reading on this point, tells us that Methodius came to believe that the criticism to which the *Symposium* was subjected would be alleviated by the completion of his *Aglaophon.* And that work, as we have already intimated, is carefully designed to clarify Methodius' views on points in the earlier work that might be regarded as associating him with controversial aspects of Origen's teaching of which he himself had become critical. Whether Methodius, at the time of the writing of the *Symposium,* was aware of the difficulties which he later found in Origen's teaching is another question, and one to which we have already answered in the negative. There is no substantial evidence to be found in the *Symposium* itself, any more than in the *De libero arbitrio* before it, that Methodius had Origen in mind, as he would later, in his criticism of those who proposed a cosmological dualism as the source of evil in the world.

The purpose of this chapter, then, is to take up in detail the evi-

dence of Methodius' indebtedness to Origen in the *Symposium.* As we already suggested, the separation of this subject from that of Methodius' indebtedness to Irenaeus and Clement is of particular importance to the study of the development of Methodius' thought. To be sure, the result of this proceeding will, in one sense, simply justify our negative answer to the question of whether there is any covert opposition to the aspects of Origen's teaching that Methodius would later criticize. But the outcome will also show what light can be shed on the more difficult, and perhaps ultimately more important, question of Origen's contribution to the peculiar emphases of Methodius' own thought regarding the divine sovereignty over the created order and the nature of the perfection now open to free human beings through a life in Christ. It is these peculiar emphases, as actually developed in the course of his later criticisms of Origen, which deserve more consideration than they have commonly been accorded. We believe they can best be recognized when Methodius' indebtedness to Origen in the *Symposium* is viewed by itself.

The Study of the Scriptures

Quite apart from the specific instances of reliance on Origen's scriptural interpretations with which the *Symposium* is replete, the place of the study of the Scriptures in the Christian life, as set forth in the work, is a subject which, while not exclusively Origen's, is developed in ways that show the peculiar impress of his emphasis on the study of the Scriptures themselves as the means to the perfection of souls.

For instance, in the first discourse, when Marcella insists on the struggle required to attain the life of chastity, she treats the "salt" of Matthew 5:13 as the "spiritual exercises in the Scriptures" without which the soul cannot be purified of the "affections" (ἐπιθυμίαι) (I.1.13). She cites, among other scriptural passages, the requirement of Leviticus 2:13, treated by Origen in the same connection, that nothing can be offered to God that is not sprinkled with salt. Thus at the outset of the work, a parallel with Origen appears in connection with the study of the Scriptures as basic to the Christian life. And it

can be urged that the discourses of the *Symposium* at large, determined as they are by the assumption that the spiritual reading of the Scriptures yields both the insight and the strength to adhere to the life of chastity, are witnesses to Origen's contribution to the genre of the work as well as to its teaching.[1]

In this connection, we should introduce some reference to the hitherto undiscussed dialogue *Sistelius: On Leprosy (De lepra)*. This work opens with an exchange between Sistelius and Eubolius, in which the "Lord's command" to study the spiritual meaning of the Torah is invoked in defense of a spiritual treatment of the provisions of Leviticus for the healing of leprosy, as bearing on the perfection of the Christian life. The "seed" of faith (Matthew 15:13), Eubolius insists in a sudden shift of reference, is sown in all souls, and those in whom it does not grow into a great tree are those who do not cultivate it. They are not to be regarded, as the Marcionites regard them, as souls trapped in the material world and incapable of being won away from its effects (*De lepra* 2:4–5). Since the reference to the "seed" of faith is similar to that in Origen's *On Exodus,* and since the main treatment of leprosy in the *Sistelius* is very largely dependent on Origen's *On Leviticus,* we may point, if only in passing, to these parallels as further evidence of Methodius' dependence on Origen in his treatment of the place of the study of the Scriptures in the Christian life.[2]

---

[1] The whole passage I.1.12–13 is of interest, since it already introduces the note of the cleansing of the bodily "tabernacle," which is a major theme in which the influence of Origen appears (see above, Discourses V and IX). Methodius' use of Origen, *In Lev. hom.,* though easily overlooked because of its allusiveness, takes on more importance when it is recognized that Methodius is far more extensively indebted to these homilies in the *De lepra;* see note 2.

[2] The reference to the parable of the sower is in Origen, *In Ex. hom.* I.1, which we have already noticed as playing an important part in the *Symp.* (see above, chap. 3, notes 22 and 55). The opening chapters of *De lepra* exist only in the Slavic translation, and are plainly abbreviated to a significant degree. The gist of the argument here, however, is clear enough. The reliance on Origen's treatment of Leviticus in the work will be taken up in Appendix 1, "The *De lepra* among Methodius' Writings."

"Shadow, Image, and Reality"

To return to the *Symposium,* we have already mentioned what may be called the chief Origenist trademark of Methodius' approach to the scriptures, namely the recurrent use of Hebrews 10:1: "The Law has a shadow of the good things to come but not the true image of those realities."[3] As introduced in Discourse V, in connection with the treatment of the wilderness tabernacle (in which we have also seen that Methodius is indebted to Origen[4]), the text supplies a threefold distinction between the Law (shadow), the Gospel proclamation it foreshadows (image), and the consummation of the divine purpose (reality) in a manner similar to that defined by Origen.[5]

In application, this distinction supplies Methodius with two related points equally Origenist in character. First, he deprecates those who concern themselves solely with the literal interpretation of the Scriptures, and their association with the Jews who do not understand the meaning of their own Scriptures, which can only be understood in the light of the Gospel.[6] Second, and far more subtly, he insists that the Gospel itself is ultimately preliminary to the final reality of life in relation to God. This second point has already been mentioned in our discussion of Thecla's reference to the Myth of the Cave, in the Platonic *Republic* in Dialogue VIII (2.173–74), and to passing

---

[3] See above, chap. 3, note 29.

[4] See chap. 3, Discourse IX, "The Final Consummation," on Methodius' sources.

[5] It is perhaps unnecessary to do more than allude to the lengthy discussions by modern scholars of Origen's use of Hebrews 10.1. As Daniélou showed, Origen's use conforms the text to Philo's three senses of the Scriptures: literal, moral, and spiritual. But Daniélou, attempting to draw a strict distinction between allegorical and typological interpretation that is currently recognized as too programmatic, overlooked the fact that Origen's use of the text is at once allegorical and typological, seeing the several senses of Scripture as both "there" in the text abstractly, so to speak, and as foreshadowing the unfolding plan of God. See Daniélou, *Origen,* trans. W. Mitchell (London: Sheed and Ward, 1955); and R. P. C. Hanson, *Allegory and Event* (London: SCM, 1959), among many works on a dispute that has long since reached resolution. Also see below, note 9.

[6] See, for instance, *De sang.* I, with its intricate imagery regarding the weaving of spiritual garlands that the Jews do not understand. The *Symp.* has passages to the same point, but none so eloquent or convoluted.

beyond knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) to intuitive communion with the divine (13.208).[7] It will subsequently recur more than once in connection with Methodius' further efforts to describe our relationship with the ultimate divine. But it is crucial here, as it was not before, to notice its Origenist character, since it will eventually be seen that it is one of the bases on which Methodius develops a view of the relation of humanity to the divine nature in contrast to the position of Origen as he will come to understand it.[8]

For the moment, however, our interest is in the extent of Methodius' indebtedness to Origen with regard to scriptural interpretation. Daniélou has said that Methodius' reminiscences of Philo and Origen are merely a matter of "nostalgia," and that he treats scriptural passages in a fashion generally more consistent with the typological approach "of Asia Minor, Irenaeus, and Melito" than with that of "high Hellenistic culture." But it seems clear that insofar as Methodius sets forth a rationale for the treatment of the Scriptures, that rationale is indebted to Origen rather than to anyone else. His approach is at once both typological and allegorical, as his use of Hebrews 10:l shows. But so is Origen's. And while the discourses of the *Symposium* certainly do not allow for a systematic treatment of particular texts, the consistency of exposition, the demands of the style of presentation notwithstanding, is scarcely to be overlooked.[9]

---

[7] See chap. 3, note 40.

[8] 8. See below, chap. 6, note 35, and Conclusion, note 3.

[9] J. Daniélou, *Gospel Message,* 289–300. Also see above, note 5. It is now commonly recognized that Daniélou's effort to distinguish sharply between typological and allegorical interpretation, particularly in Origen, overlooked their conflation in the thought and practice of Origen himself. See Daniélou, *Origen,* trans. W. Mitchell (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1955), 133–91; also see his *From Shadows to Reality,* trans. W. Hibberd (London: Burns and Oates, 1960), 103ff. Daniélou recognized that in practice such a distinction was not observed, but continued to assume that such a distinction could be more clearly defined in principle than is presently thought. It should be notice that Daniélou, in the passage quoted, apparently identifies Methodius among those who belong to a *Kleinasiatischen Schüle* of the second and third centuries, whose existence as such is highly conjectural; see Conclusion, note 2.

The Literal Sense in the Symposium

There can be no better evidence that Methodius in the *Symposium* is not as yet engaged with the issues that would arise in his criticism of Origen than his treatment of the importance of the literal sense of the Scriptures in the discourses. Even when due regard is paid to the literary genre of the work, it must be said that an uninhibited, perhaps unwary, celebration of the spiritual sense of the Scriptures predominates. A particular case among many, in view of Methodius' later attention to the literal sense, is the treatment of Jotham's fable in Discourse X (2.260–63), where the principle that such scriptural passages as the account of the talking trees have no literal meaning is assumed without qualification or argument.

An exception to this exuberance is Methodius' careful defense of the appropriateness of an allegorical interpretation of the creation of Eve from the side of Adam in Discourse III (2. 56–57). Following Ephesians 5:28–32 by treating the passage as referring to Christ and the Church, Thalia says she is in no way contradicting the importance of God's command to "increase and multiply" defended by her predecessor in Discourse II. She cautions that it is important "not to despise [the text] as it stands [τῶν κειμένων], as is often said," particularly in Genesis, "which contains the immutable divine decrees for the organization of the universe."

But this passage is not as helpful in clarifying Methodius' views as it might first appear to be. It is formally part of Thalia's justification of her own allegorical interpretation in contrast to that of her predecessor; and it is also part of the contrived dispute between the initial speakers on which we have commented. In substance, the result of the expositions of the text of Genesis in these discourses is to show that it is possible for there to be both a literal and a spiritual interpretation of the same text.

The question that must be asked, of course, is who Methodius has in mind, both in saying that the literal text of Genesis is "not to be despised" and in referring to those who have "often said" that this is the case. In the context of the second discourse, on the importance of marriage, the increase of humanity by procreation, and the good-

ness of even illegitimate births, and with Methodius' general dependence on Clement in mind, it seems likely that it is the Marcionites or Valentinians whose treatments of Genesis are being implicitly criticized. At the same time, those who have "often said" that we should not despise the literal meaning of Genesis might well include Clement, and certainly Irenaeus. It could even include Origen, since his view that there are Scriptural passages without literal meaning does not, in principle, extend to Genesis.[10] Neither Farges nor Musurillo, in any case, regard this passage as overtly directed against Origen, and there is certainly no reason to think that it is.[11]

We must come, then, to the point of saying that there is no evidence that the Methodius of the *Symposium* is anything else but a follower of Origen on the principles of scriptural interpretation as he understands them. It will later appear that he came to a different view of the notion that some texts do not have a literal meaning, and that he criticized Origen for having held this position. But that is certainly not the case here.

---

[10] See Origen, *In Gen. hom.* I.14–17 and II.6.

[11] Farges, *Idées,* 235–36, is perhaps a bit ambiguous on the point, since he goes on past III.2 to notice Methodius' later insistence on the literal meaning against Origen in the *Aglaophon*. Musurillo, in *ACW*, 197, simply says that Methodius has in mind the "extreme allegorism" of the Alexandrian School. But we have tried to show (in chap. 3) that there seem to be quite specific persons whose rejection of the literal meaning of the command to "increase and multiply" are here in view. We have also noticed that the treatment of the trance of Adam, in III.1 is not without its parallels in Origen (see chap. 3, note 20). For a general treatment of the classical roots and Jewish-Christian reactions to the use of allegorical interpretation, see the still valuable work of . Pépin, *Mythe et allégorie* (Paris: Aubier, 1958), and for a largely unsympathic treatment of Origen's work, R. P. C. Hanson, *Allegory and Event* (London: SCM, 1959). But recent study of Origen's purpose and method is more sympathetically treated in K. J. Torjesen, *Hermeneutical Procedure and Theological Method in Origen's Exegesis* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1985), as well as in her "'Body,' 'Soul' and 'Spirit' in Origen's Theory of Exegesis," *ATR* 67 (1995): 17–30. Also useful in this and other connections is D. T. Runia, *Philo in Early Christian Literature* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 1993). On the specific question of the sources of Origen's view that some texts have no literal meanings, it is still worth consulting R. M. Grant, *The Letter and the Spirit* (New York: Macmillan, 1957). But none of these writings—and there are many more of them—helps us to understand who Methodius is particularly referring to.

The "Begetting" and "Becoming Human" of the Word

We have already noticed instances of Methodius' indebtedness to Origen's teaching on Christology. However, closer attention to these instances, from the perspective of Origen's teaching, makes that indebtedness a good deal clearer. Indeed, it elicits the remarkable fact that Methodius actually followed what he understood to be Origen's view of the "eternal begetting" (ἐνανθρώπησις) of the Word in Christ.[12] The subject is, again, one that deserves independent attention in view of Methodius' later criticism of Origen on the closely related subject of the "eternal creation" of the cosmos through the Word.

Discourse VII contains an instance of such indebtedness, which also reveals some of the difficulties involved in its interpretation. Here Procilla defends treating the Song of Songs as words of Christ, who needs no witness other than God (John 5:31). She observes that the "prophets and apostles" thought God alone an adequate witness to the "Son of God [who existed] before the ages [πρὸ τῶν αἰώνων] and predicated of him a divinity above all other men, since he who is greater than all things after the Father [John 14:28] should have the Father as his witness, who alone is greater than he" (VII.1.149–50).[13]

There can be little doubt that this description of the Son, who existed "before the ages," as possessing a status "above all other γεν-

[12] I have treated these matters in some detail in "The Creation of the Word in Methodius' *Symposium," SP* 9 (1968): 240–50, and have not essentially departed from that treatment here, except to be more careful in observing Origen's references to the Word as "begotten" (νάω are concerned (see chap. 2, note 17), and in incidental references to the widely held, but doubtful, view that Origen taught the preexistence and restoration of souls to a wholly disembodied state.

[13] See above, chap. 3, note 46, on matters connected with the discussion of the creation of the Word in Discourse VIII.9. See also chap. 6, note 22, on the creation of the Word in the *Xeno*.

νητόι. The reference here is merely an allusion in the midst of an argument to the quite different point of the appropriateness of treating the Song of Songs as words of Christ. Yet it is for that very reason significant as showing that this way of describing the relation of the Word to the Father is an ordinary assumption on Methodius' part.

To introduce once again a reference outside of the *Symposium,* it is important to note that another, more direct reference to Methodius' view of this matter is provided in the letter-treatise *De sanguisuga.* In discussing the text "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows his handiwork" (Psalm 18:2), Methodius offers the interpretation that the "heavens" are the angels who alone can "declare" Christ, whom Wisdom 7:25 calls the "wisdom and glory through whom everything has come into being," and whom Hebrews 1:3 says is "higher than all creation," and "receives nothing from anyone except the Father alone." On the other hand, the "firmament" that "reveals his handiwork" is the Church, which "receives incorruption" from him. (VII–VIII).[14] Plainly, the same scheme of the relation of Father and Son is here in view as in Discourse VII, though with the added—and equally Origenist—note that Christ is the manifestation in the flesh of the Wisdom through which the cosmos is brought into being.

Passing to the Adam-Christ typology of Discourse III, we find the arresting statement that "Christ became the very same as Adam through the descent into him of the Word [who existed] before the ages [ἐνανθρω-

[14] According to the Slavic translation, Methodius offers a second interpretation of the text (*De sang.* VIII) in which the "heavens" and "firmament" may stand for "understanding" and "feeling" (αἰσθήσις?) which on the one hand recognize that Christ has come in the flesh, and on the other allow his body, the Church, to resist the lusts of the flesh (1 Jn. 4:2). It is hard to say what the status of this second interpretation in relation to the first may be, although the letter is generally devoted to the necessity of finding spiritual meanings in the Scriptures, of which there may presumably be more than one. In each case, emphasis is finally laid on subjects that bear on themes that might be thought related to the projected work "on the body" mentioned at its conclusion. See above, chap. 1, "De sanguisuga."

ἐνανθρώπησις, which is again a virtual Origenist trademark.

Methodius' subsequent interpretation of the Matthean parable of the "descent" of the shepherd in search of the hundredth sheep—with its reference to the Word "who was and is, being 'in the beginning' with God and 'being God'" (John 1:1–2) as "assuming human nature" in order to carry the lost sheep "up from the world of pleasures"—adapts to Methodius' purposes an Origenist interpretation of the parable, in as obvious a way as the use of the term ἐνανθρώπησις itself.

The question that needs to be raised here, as it could not be conveniently raised in the earlier chapter, is whether Methodius' use of Origen's interpretation of the parable implies agreement with—or even knowledge of—all of the implications of Origen's view of the original number of souls that will finally be returned to the state from which they fell away. This is a question that will shortly be taken up, in connection with several other similar points regarding Methodius' understanding of Origen's teaching at the time of his writing the *Symposium*.

But it is in Thecla's Discourse VIII, the most general treatment of the issues that concern us here apart from Discourse III, that the clearest light is shed on the subject of Methodius' Origenism, and the greatest difficulties of interpretation present themselves. The eighth discourse, it will be recalled, includes an interpretation of the woman who gives birth to the male child in the wilderness (Rev.

12:1–6), as well as of the child who is taken up into the heavens, and of the 1260 days that the woman spends in the wilderness. In Thecla's interpretation, the male child is not Christ, "who was conceived long before" (VIII.7.188–90), but is the Christian who is born as "another Christ" and taken out of reach of the evil powers. The woman is the Church, who gives birth to such Christians and is preserved through faith in the Trinity represented by the 1260 days.

Even at this point, the presence of a theme from Origen is to be noticed in the description of the Christian as "another Christ."[15] But the reference to Christ as one who was "conceived long before [κυήθεις]" is vague enough to give rise to an excursus on the begetting of the Word (VIII.9.192–93) which has been the source of some dispute among interpreters.

There is no need to rehearse the contents of this "excursus" in Thecla's discussion again, except as it turns on the interpretation of "You are my Son, this day I have begotten you" in relation to the account of Jesus' baptism (Lk. 3:22; var., cf. Psalm 2:7). The text shows that Christ is proclaimed Son "unconditionally and timelessly [πρὸ τῶν αἰώνων]" needed now to be "begotten for the world—that is, that what was previously known should be manifest."

We have already taken issue with Musurillo's view that the discussion here is a later effort to correct Methodius' "subordinationism," and argued that it is the result of Methodius' own editing. As such it follows Clement in insisting, against gnostic opponents, that the baptism of Jesus was not the occasion for the manifestation of the Saviour but for the Word's being, in the imagery if not the precise

[15] The notion is found in Clement, but the recurrent phrase is more common to Origen. See my "The Creation of the Word in Methodius' *Symposium*."

language of Clement, "begotten for the world. "[16] But we should now add that, apart from any influence of Clement, the language Methodius uses regarding the begetting of the Son is hard to explain except as a version of Origen's teaching on the "eternal begetting [πρὸ τῶν αἰώνων]."

Once this is said, however, we should add that it is doubtful that Methodius entirely grasps what Origen means by "eternal begetting." In the course of this discussion language is used that suggests that what Methodius has in mind is a vastly prior origin, which he still, somehow, conceives as an origin in time. We shall subsequently see that this uncertainty as to what Origen means by ἀεὶ γεννητός has much to do with Methodius' criticism of him on the related question of the "eternal creation" of the cosmos in the *Xeno,* where Methodius takes "eternal creation" to mean perpetual temporal creation, and hence as implying that the cosmos is a second "uncreated" reality alongside God.[18] Nevertheless, so far as the Methodius of the *Sym-*

[16] See above, chap. 3, notes 45 and 46.

[17] See my "The Creation of the Word in Methodius' *Symposium,"* where some time is spent in reviewing the language of Justin, who is at pains to say that the "creation" of the Word is not of the normal sort, and of Irenaeus, who recurrently cites "who can tell of his creation [τὴν γενεὰν αὐτοῦ]" (Is. 53:8) to avoid the problem of the relation of the Word's creation and that of other creatures. See, e.g., *AH* II.28.5, but more generally II.12–15, 28.1–5). See below, chap. 6, note 13.

[18] See below, chap. 6. The point is a crucial one, both for Methodius' dependence on Origen in the *Symp.* and on his later criticism of Origen in the *Xeno*. In Methodius' favor, it must be said that the phrase ἀεὶ γεννητός itself has a sense of temporality about it. But Origen himself is clear that the begetting of the Word, as a spiritual reality, is not material, and thus "takes place" beyond the confines of time and space (*PA* I.1–6, 2.6–8). However, it is not clear that anyone except Origen was so clear on this point. Certainly Methodius was not.

posium is concerned, this excursus is important evidence of his dependence on Origen, both on the creation and on the "becoming human" of the Word.

The Fall and Restoration of Souls

Without doubt, the most striking evidence of Methodius' indebtedness to Origen in the *Symposium* is his use of a variety of scriptural interpretations that embody speculations regarding the fall and restoration of souls, some of which Methodius will be concerned to clarify—if not to correct—in the *Aglaophon*. But the extent of this indebtedness to Origen in the *Symposium* is greater than that indicated by the specific points that Methodius will later be concerned to clarify—or to correct. Even though much of this indebtedness has been noticed in passing in the previous chapter, it will be useful here to give some indication of its extent, since it has a peculiar bearing on Methodius' own later treatment of the subject of the defection and restoration of humanity, as he works it out in the course of his criticism of Origen.

We may commence with the reference of Thalia, just mentioned, in Discourse III.5, to the Matthean parable of the shepherd in care of the hundred sheep, which in Origen's text has the shepherd leaving the ninety-nine on the mountain, and making a "descent" to bring back the one that was lost.[19] There is no doubt that Methodius here develops—in support of his own concern for the bringing back of the lost sheep from the life of passion—an interpretation that embodies Origen's notion of the original creation of a perfect number of rational creatures that will be restored at the ἀποκατάστασις, after the completion of the perfect number by procreation, as a restoration of a unity that existed before the disobedience of souls and their defection from communion with

[19] See above, chap. 3, note 17.

the Word.[20] This is, in any case, not a subject on which we have any evidence that Methodius is later concerned to criticize Origen.[21]

Equally unmistakable references to Origen's teaching on the descent of souls are made by Theopatra, in Discourse IV.3–4, where she refers to the fact that "it has been said" that Pharaoh is a type of the devil, and rules the "Egypt of this world" from Adam to Moses, and then goes on to present the slaughter of the male children in Egypt as an example of the devil enticing people from the rational rather than the passionate life. This section shows clear acquaintance with Origen's treatment, in the homilies *On Exodus,* of the descent of Israel into the Egypt of this world.[22] In the context of Origen's grand scheme of the spiritual interpretation of the Pentateuch, this is part of the account of the descent and return of souls on which Methodius is also later reliant in his treatment of the wilderness tabernacle as a stop on the return to the Promised Land, to which we will turn shortly. Once again, Methodius here shows his reliance on Origen, notwithstanding the fact that there is no evidence of his appreciation of the vast scope and significance of this spiritual history in Origen's thought. This, too, is not a subject to which he returns in his criticism of Origen.

Two Specific Points

Quite different from the instances of reliance on Origen in the *Symposium* thus far mentioned are the specific points on which Methodius will later be concerned to clarify—or correct—his use of

[20] See above, chap. 3, on Discourses I–III, IX.

[21] As we shall see, in dealing with fragments of the *De creat.* in chap. 6, the extent of Methodius' criticism of Origen is quite uncertain. Thus, when we say, here and hereafter, that he does not deal with such matters as the original perfection and restoration of the perfect number of humanity, we are relying only on the evidence that we have. Nonetheless, there is no indication that this and other subjects that we mention as not treated later were in fact included among the aspects of Origen's teaching touched upon in the later work.

[22] Other instances of Methodius' use of the *In Ex. hom.* occur in the *De lepra,* especially in relation to the spiritual reading of the Torah and the appointment of Aaron; see Appendix 1, "The *De lepra* among Methodius' Writings."

Origen. These are the discussion of creation "in the image" of God in Discourse VI, and the treatment of the "tabernacle" in Discourses VII and IX.

"In the Image"

We need not repeat what we have said regarding the introduction to Discourse VI, in which Agathe describes souls as "coming into this world with an extraordinary beauty that has a relationship and kinship to Wisdom," and goes on to say that they "most clearly resemble him who created and formed them when they continue to reflect that true state 'according to the likeness' and the outlines of that vision which [God] saw when he fashioned them and gave them an imperishable form [μορφήν]," adding that the divine being made them "in the image of the only-begotten" (VI.1.133–35). We simply note here again that Methodius' language seems to suggest that the soul is "in the image of the [divine] image," which is the Wisdom or Word, and that he thus follows both Clement and Origen regarding the creation "in the image of the image" of God. That he earlier, in Discourses I and II, seems to treat "image" and "likeness" in a different fashion has already been discussed.[23]

The curious thing is that other scholars have been tempted to group this among the passages that show that Methodius followed Origen in entertaining a preexistence of souls, and that this teaching is in fact reflected elsewhere in the discourses, most specifically in the description of the introduction of souls into bodies in Discourse II.5.41. There, however, in the course of a discussion of the fact that illegitimate births are good, it is simply incidentally said that no one believes that souls are conveyed along with semen in the sexual act.[24] From our perspective, the only significance of the passage in Discourse VI for Methodius' indebtedness to Origen lies in the fact of his using the theme of creation "in the image of the [divine] image"

[23] See above, chap. 3, notes 30 and 32.

[24] See above, chapter 3, note 60. See Farges, *Idées,* 96, for a discussion of the passage in Discourse II.5. Cf. Musurillo, *ACW,* 194, for a possible interpolation in the text reflecting early debate with regard to Methodius' teaching.

in a fashion that suggests that it applies only to the soul. Possible charges of Origenism on this point may account for his later concern, in the *Aglaophon,* to insist that the human form (μορφή) includes both soul and body, even though such a view is more or less clearly assumed elsewhere in the *Symposium*.[25]

"The Tabernacle"

More significant, as we have already noticed, is the extent of Methodius' indebtedness to Origen's treatment of the wilderness tabernacle in Discourse IX, and the unwary statement of Tusiane that after the millennium of rest "I shall not abide in the tabernacles" (IX.5.254–55) but follow Christ into heaven. We have already suggested that the qualifying statement, which reads "that is, the tabernacle of my body will not remain the same, but will be changed from its human structure [σχήμα] and corruption to angelic grandeur and beauty," is probably the result of Methodius' editing of the discourse to make clear that the final state of souls is not to be disembodied.[26] However this may be, it is clear that the treatment of the wilderness tabernacle, together with the use of the tripartite distinction of image, likeness, and reality, based on Hebrews 10:1, in interpreting the theme of the tabernacle (IX.1.236–39), is dependent on this aspect of Origen's grand scheme of the spiritual history of the fall and restoration of souls, as laid out in his reading of the Pentateuch. It was, in any case, an aspect of the teaching of the *Symposium* that Methodius would be at pains to clarify in the *Aglaophon,* if he had not already begun to do so in his editing of the *Symposium* itself.[27] Yet the fact remains that Methodius clarifies his views on this point without any apparent grasp of Origen's purpose in his treatment of this

[25] See above, chap. 3, on Discourses I–III, passim, on the creation of humanity as a union of soul and body.

[26] See above, chap. 3, note 53. On Origen's view of souls as never existing in a disembodied state, see below, chap. 5, note 4. That Methodius at some point came to think that Origen had virtually embraced the contrary view will be clear from the discussion of the *Aglaophon.*

[27] On the theme of the tabernacles in the *Aglaophon,* see below, chapter 5, "The Feast of Tabernacles Revisited."

spiritual history, to at least some aspects of which Methodius was deeply indebted.

Origen in the Symposium

Methodius' indebtedness to Origen in the *Symposium* might be a matter of no more than passing interest were it not for his later criticism of Origen on what are, pretty clearly, subjects on which that indebtedness is obvious here. To put it another way, it is our knowledge of Methodius' criticism of Origen in both the *Aglaophon* and the *Xeno* that makes his use of Origen in the *Symposium* a matter of perplexity, and a subject worth considering in itself, notwithstanding his reliance on Irenaeus and Clement in the same work.

In our view, of course, the evidence of Methodius' indebtedness to Origen is in no way surprising. Some knowledge of the order of the writings, as it bears in particular on the criticism of the *Symposium* and the composition of the *Aglaophon* as revealed in the *De cibis,* makes it quite intelligible that Methodius should have relied on Origen for points of interpretation that reflect views he would later criticize. If Methodius here shows himself to be, to a certain extent, an "unwitting Origenist," that fact serves only to illuminate his subsequent criticisms of the great Alexandrian, whom he continued to respect despite what he would come to think was his acceptance of the assumptions of the philosophical and gnostic teachers whom Methodius was concerned to oppose.

As we now turn to Methodius' criticism of Origen, it is with a clearer picture of both the probable criticisms brought against the *Symposium* and the reasons for Methodius' interest in asserting his differences from Origen. From our own perspective, however, it will also be of interest to notice the ways in which Methodius' own theological views developed, in the peculiar circumstances of his criticism of Origen, on points at which they continued to be far closer than Methodius himself was willing—or perhaps able—to recognize.

5—
De resurrectione and the Initial Criticism of Origen

We have already dealt, in earlier comments on the chronology of the writings, with such evidence as we have concerning the circumstances of the writing of the initial, better known, and more problematical of Methodius' criticisms of Origen, the dialogue *Aglaophon: On the Resurrection.*[1] We should return to that evidence now as it bears directly on the composition of that work.

The Composition of the Aglaophon

The illuminating and useful letter-treatise *De cibis,* with its apologetic references to criticism of the *Symposium* and its acknowledgment of the failure to complete the work "on the resurrection" as causes of Methodius' failure to respond to the request of his correspondents for interpretations of certain scriptural passages which may have raised questions in the minds of readers of the *Symposium* itself, implies that the completion of this work, whether or not by then accomplished, would somehow alleviate criticism of the *Symposium.* Indeed, the substance of the *De cibis* itself, with its initial outspoken refusal to abandon the search for the spiritual meaning of the Scrip-

[1] See chap. 1, "The Evidence of the Writings: The Letter-Treatises."

tures, combined with subtle references to the resurrection of bodies as inherent in the spiritual meaning of the scriptural passages treated, suggests that criticism of the *Symposium* had in some fashion to do either with its use of allegory, its references to the resurrection, or both.[2] In any case, the similarities between the implied agenda of the work "on the resurrection" and our *Aglaophon* make it hard not to think that the views taken up there were already at issue when Methodius replied to his correspondents.

The *De cibis* thus not only provides us with our principal concrete evidence regarding the chronological order of three of Methodius' writings, but also sheds light on the circumstances in which the present form of the *Aglaophon* took shape.

Yet the *De cibis* is not the only evidence we have concerning the composition of the work. The other letter-treatise, *De sanguisuga,* ends with a reference to a projected work "on the body" as the place where Methodius will deal further with one of the scriptural passages (Wis. 7:1–2, "I am myself also a mortal, like to all . . . ") on which his views have been sought; and this passage is in fact mentioned, although only incidentally, at *De resurrectione* I.26.1.[3] Since the *De*

[2] See above, chap. 1, note 19, for reference to my "Notes on *De cibis* and Methodius' View of Origen." Beyond the educated guess as to why the *Symp.* was subject to criticism, it is impossible to go. Our own reading of the work, in the last chapter, has shown that Methodius does indeed lay himself open, however unwittingly, to the charge of regarding the final state of perfected humanity as beyond the embodied state in which it presently exists, and perhaps even of regarding (preexisting?) souls as alone created in the "image and likeness" of God. But it is at least possible that, did we know who Methodius' critics were, we would find that its defense of allegorical interpretation was in itself enough to provoke suspicion of accepting the views of Origen. An analogous problem, as we shall see, confronts us in attempting to identify the body of teaching that Methodius himself associates with Origen. Such may, quite apart from the specific points at which Methodius deals with texts of Origen, represent the "Origen" popularly understood by his critics.

[3] See De *sang.* X.4, where the point of the argument is that Wisdom 7:1–2, with its reference to the "mortal man, born of the earth," is be understood as concerning Solomon himself and not taken typologically as having to do with Wisdom manifest in Christ. At *De res.* I.26.1 it is the second protagonist, Proclus, who makes the same point in the quite different context of exempting the incarnate Christ from a consideration of the essential mutability of the physical body. It would seem that Methodius is prepared to take the text in the same way in both works, but that the context in which

(footnote continued on next page)

sanguisuga not only commences with another extended celebration of the spiritual interpretation of the Scriptures, but is itself innocent of matters later disputed, it is at least conceivable that our *Aglaophon* was not initially intended to take up the specific set of considerations to which it is now devoted.[4]

In any case, it is clear that the initial purpose of the present *Aglaophon,* as suggested by the opening description of the participants gathered at the house of Aglaophon as "philosophizing about the body" and "conversing about the resurrection" (*De resurrectione* I.1.2), is to contrast Christian teaching on the resurrection with views assumed to arise from the philosophical tradition on embodiment. This opening, with its obvious similarities to that of the *De libero arbitrio* regarding the problem of evil, supports the view that our *Aglaophon,* whether initially so intended or not, became the vehicle for expounding Methodius' views in the face of criticism leveled against the *Symposium*.

The Criticism of Origen As a Later Consideration

A central problem confronting the reader of the present dialogue, however, is that of the extent to which the work was conceived, from its inception, as a criticism of the views of Origen. As we shall see, the opening statement of Aglaophon regarding the preexistence of souls and their subsequent embodiment is defended from scriptural texts that were not employed to that purpose by Origen himself. In

(footnote continued from previous page)

he interprets it in *De res.* has altered in view of the issues there under discussion. In this sense, the treatment of this relatively minor text may support the notion that there has been a development of Methodius' agenda between the anticipated reference in *De sang.* and its subsequent appearance in the *Aglaophon*.

[4] *De sang.* contains two other references to arguments later found in *De res.:* an anticipation of the lengthy treatment of 1 Cor. 15:50 ("Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven") as referring to sin rather than to the body (*De sang.* VIII.5; cf. *De res.* II.17–18), and a brief reference to Psalms 123:6 ("If the Lord had not been on our side . . . ") in an argument that scriptural allusions to drowning have to do with the overwhelming of the soul with passions rather than the destruction of bodies (*De sang.* III.3–4; cf. *De res.* I.56.4). But while these references certainly suggest that the projected work "on the body" is the work that finally issues in our *Aglaophon,* they contain no hint of its present agenda, such as is implied in *De cibis*.

fact, the assumptions regarding embodied existence set forth both by Aglaophon and Proclus, his supporter, are far different from those governing Origen's treatment of either the resurrection or the physical embodiment of souls. It is doubtful that Origen ever envisioned the existence of souls without bodies of some kind. Indeed, it is clear that his speculations regarding the descent of souls into denser bodies as a result of their turning from God, and their subsequent return to a purified but still embodied state, was intended to counter any notion that embodiment as such is the source of evil, though his frequent references to the problem of embodiment obviously gave a quite different impression from an early time.[5]

It is quite possible, then, to regard Origen as, so to speak, a late-

[5] It is hardly posssible to deal briefly with Origen's views on these matters, on which so much has been written and so much remains controverted. It is certain, however, that Origen was basically concerned to attribute evil to the turning of rational natures from God (*PA* I.4). To the question of whether he thought such rational natures, whether solestial, angelic, or human, ever existed in a disembodied state, an answer would require an examination of the conflicted evidence of the Rufinian translation and the later Greek fragments of such passages as *PA* I.8 and II.2–3. Current thinking, indeed thinking beginning with G. Bardy, *Récherches sur l'histoire du texte et des versions Latines du "De principiis" d'Origène* (Paris: Champion, 1923), has increasingly recognized that the Greek fragments are as untrustworthy as Rufinus was once thought to be. Not only those from the Justinianic era of Origen's condemnation and even later, but, precisely on the subject at hand, the lengthy passage in Gregory of Nyssa, *De hom. opif.* XXVIII—cf. Gregory's *De an. et res.* PG 44, 112C–13D and Origen's *PA* I.8.4 that may owe something to the later Origenism of the sort developed by Evagrius Ponticus, are suspect. That Origen did recognize the difficulties of accepting the survival of the present bodily structure, and conceived of the present state of human embodiment as transitory and designed to strengthen souls through conflict with the passions, does not preclude his recurrent efforts to explain the scriptural testimony regarding the resurrection as referring to souls as possessing rarified bodies. In this case, his view (as represented by Rufinus at *PA* II.2; cf. IV.4) that only the members of the Godhead are disembodied, is virtually that which Methodius develops against him in *De res.* III.18.4. Without doubt, however, Origen frequently refers to the present state of embodiment as alien to the soul, and opens himself to Methodius' criticism that there is an essential discontinuity between the present and the spiritual body. Moreover, Origen's treatment of these subjects cannot be disassociated from his view of the eternal creation of rational natures, and thus at least in some sense of constituent elements of the cosmos as well (see, e.g., the conflicted text of *PA* II.6.5). This will be the subject of Methodius' later De *creat.,* but may already influence his assumption in this work that Origen is, in some sense, committed to the views of those who assume the existence of two "uncreated" realities, God and matter, in order to explain evil.

comer to the dialogue as it now stands. In fact, Methodius' introduction of a substantial excerpt from Origen's commentary on Psalm 1:5, "Sinners shall not stand upright in the judgment" (I.20–24), which deals with the difficulties inherent in understanding the resurrection, while it serves to support the argument of Proclus, seems to effect a dislocation in the structure of the work. And this is also the case when Methodius, under the name of Eubolius, after first dealing with the views of the primary opponents, only later converts the final parts of the work (III.3ff.) into something like a systematic refutation of the scriptural texts treated in this excerpt and other texts identified as Origen's. It is possible that a revision of the work, in the course of its composition, converted it into a vehicle for the examination of Origen's views, and that Methodius did not at first envision it as serving this purpose.

But as that may be, a basic problem for any treatment of the present text of the *Aglaophon* consists in understanding the rationale for including arguments drawn from Origen within the context of the treatment of physical nature on the basis of assumptions not only different from Origen's own but closer, in important respects, to those associated with a cosmological dualism of God and matter as the necessary explanation of evil (the subject dealt with in the *De libero arbitrio).*

The solution proposed to this problem here is that Methodius, perhaps already by the time of the writing of *De cibis* but certainly thereafter, had come to view Origen's teaching on the embodiment of souls as reflecting acceptance of the position criticized in the *De libero arbitrio* and, elaborated in a more comprehensive fashion, in the *Symposium* as well. For whatever reason, the Origen of the *Aglaophon* is presented as one whose teaching agrees with the dualism drawn out of the Scriptures by the principal protagonists of the dialogue.

The Treatment of Origen

Much of the attention paid to Methodius in recent scholarship has been concerned with his misinterpretation of Origen's views, as well as with its considerable influence on later readings of Origen.[6] Several

[6] See above, Introduction, notes 5 and 8, for reference to A. Vitores, J. Deckow,

(footnote continued on next page)

points are thus worth making, without mitigating the substance of this criticism. For one thing, Origen's teaching on the embodiment of souls was presumably not then—as indeed it is not now—easily capable of being comprehended. Moreover, Methodius, as we shall see, dealt not merely with such firsthand evidence as he had of Origen's work, but with interpretations and elaborations of which we already have some slight evidence from his time, but which we know to have flourished in the following century.[7] That Methodius himself contributed to popularizing such interpretations and elaborations through his *Aglaophon* does not alter the fact that he did not read his Origen with the critical attention we assume to be appropriate, though it is certainly the case that Origen laid himself open to such interpretations and elaborations.

But there are other aspects of Methodius' treatment of Origen here that should not be overshadowed by these misinterpretations. In the *Aglaophon,* Origen remains for Methodius in a special category. He is, as Proclus says (I.19.1) in introducing the excerpt from the commentary on the Psalter, "a man of the Church," whose views are

(footnote continued from previous page)

and E. A. Clark as largely concerned with Methodius' misinterpretation of Origen. See also H. Crouzel, "Les Critiques adressées par Méthode et ses contemporains à la doctrine origénienne du corps ressuscité," *Gregorianum* 53 (1972): 679–716, esp. 694–95, and Deckow's more recent "Origen and Corporeality: The Case of Methodius' *On the Resurrection,*" in *Origeniana Quinta,* 509–18. See also my "Who Are the Opponents in Methodius' *De resurrectione?," SP* 19 (1989): 121–29. Clark's references to Methodius in her comprehensive *Origenist Controversy* mentions him solely in this connection, though her purpose is to deal with larger issues relating to Origen's teaching on the body.

[7] See below, note 23, on the treatise *De res.,* ascribed to Athenagoras but probably a response to issues raised on embodiment roughly contemporary with Methodius. But perhaps more significant is the evidence, supplied by Tertullian, *De res. carnis* and *De cam. Christi,* of a standard set of scriptural texts interpreted in conflicting ways by proponents and opponents of what was to become, in part as a result of Methodius' work, the accepted view of scriptural teaching regarding the resurrection. That the tenor of Origen's treatment of some of these texts might posssibly identify him as an opponent of the accepted teaching may well account for Methodius' view of Origen as identified with the assumptions of the heterodox speakers of his *Aglaophon*. We have drawn attention to the parallels between the views of the opponents in the *De lib. arbit.* and those criticized in Tertullian, *Adv. Hermog.*, in chap. 3, and will notice parallels in the present work with those of the writings of Tertullian just mentioned; see below, notes 28 and 29.

invoked, as an ecclesiastical authority, in support of those already urged against the material integrity and perpetuity of the body. Nor is this phrase merely to be passed over as part of the apparatus of the dialogue. As we already noticed, not all the views criticized in the work are attributed to Origen, though it is a fair assumption that Methodius had come to believe that they were at least consistent with his views, and the subsequent influence of the work led many to be considered as such. Even so, Methodius' special concern with Origen eventually extends to matters only indirectly related to the subject at hand. Thus he is insistent, with regard to the principles of scriptural interpretation, that it is an error not to regard all passages of the Scriptures as having a literal as well as a spiritual interpretation (III.8.3). The point, of course, clarifies an issue on which Methodius may have seemed unclear in the *Symposium* (X.2–3; cf. III.1–2), and thus may even have some further bearing on the question of the criticism leveled at that work. Nevertheless, its consideration here shows Methodius to be attempting to identify specific causes for what he considers Origen's inconsistent departure from Christian teaching. Origen is plainly, by this time, the specific person whose views Methodius regards as worth his while to analyze as well as to criticize.[8]

In other words, while Methodius may have come to think that Origen's view of the physical nature was the result of his embrace of the fundamental assumptions criticized in the *Aglaophon,* Origen becomes in the course of the dialogue the real figure, in contrast to the fictional speakers, to be reckoned with. This is in no way surprising in view of Methodius' own indebtedness to Origen throughout the

[8] Plainly Origen is not the only person on whose allegorical interpretations Methodius draws in the course of his writings. Clement is included in the number, as is Hippolytus (see Bonwetsch's apparatus). It is far from clear that Methodius is aware of the variety of views regarding the question of literal interpretation discussed in R. M. Grant, *The Letter and the Spirit* (New York: Macmillan, 1957), 95ff.; see above, chap. 4, note 11. But it is with Origen's principles of interpretation in view that Methodius here addresses the question of the proper treatment of the Scriptures. Apart from the irresponsible use of allegory mentioned at I.39.2, the importance of the literal sense is explicitly connected with criticism of Origen at III.8.3, who is also charged with disregarding his own principle that the Scriptures do not contradict themselves at III.20.1–4.

writings, including aspects of his treatment of the resurrection itself in the *Symposium.* One can scarcely neglect, at this point, to recall Eusebius' question: "How Methodius now dares to attack Origen when he has so often been dependent on him in the past?"[9] It is possible that the circumstances of his writing the *Aglaophon* provide an answer to that question.

This consideration has an important bearing on how we read the *Aglaophon.* Quite apart from noticing Methodius' misinterpretations—or at least his "misrepresentations"—of Origen in the work, we must see that Methodius here is confronted, in some significant degree, with questions regarding embodied existence, its purpose and survival, to which Origen himself had proposed answers. Methodius undertakes not only to clarify—and it would seem at points to correct—his own earlier views in the *Symposium,* but also to offer alternative solutions to serious problems raised by Origen, as he now understands him, regarding the embodiment of souls, problems that had not before engaged his attention. Indeed, this aspect of the work, easily overlooked when only the specific features of his treatment of Origen are under consideration, was to have positive influence on Methodius' own thought no less important than the more obvious influence of the *Aglaophon's* misrepresentations of Origen's actual views.[10]

The Opening of the Dialogue

The importance of the Slavic translation, which, as in the case of the *De libero arbitrio,* supplies the framework for the surviving Greek fragments, is of even greater significance here, since only it provides

---

[9] Pamphilus-Eusebius, *Apol. pro Orig.,* quoted in Jerome, C. *Ruf.* I.11; see above, chap. 1, note 16.

[10] Instances of Methodius' influence on Gregory of Nyssa's treatment of embodied existence have frequently been noticed. See, e.g., Daniélou, *L'Etre et le temps chez Grégoire de Nysse,* but also see Brooks Otis, "Cappadocian Theology as a Coherent System," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers No.* 12, 97–124; "Gregory of Nyssa and the Cappadocian Conception of Time," *SP* 14 (1976): 327–57; and Heine, *Perfection in the Virtuous Life,* 35ff., esp. 45–46. The engagement of Gregory with Methodius in *De hom. opif.* and *De an. et res.* will be considered at the end of this chapter.

both the initial description of the setting of the dialogue and the principal arguments of the main protagonists down to the introduction of the excerpt from Origen's commentary on the Psalter (*De resurrectione* I.22)[11]

Thanks to the translation, we know that the work began, as does the *De libero arbitrio,* in a setting that contains reminiscences of the Platonic *Protagoras* and *Phaedo*. Eubolius, representing Methodius by his now familiar cognomen, recounts his visit to Patara in company with Procus of Miletus to see a certain visitor, Theophilus, whom he discovered in the house of a physician named Aglaophon. Gathered in Aglaophon's portico was a group including Sistelius, Auxentius, Memian, and others, all of whom were discussing the "nature of the body" and conversing with Theophilus "about the resurrection" (I.1.3)[12]

Though Theophilus is the one seated and apparently answering questions, his only function in the dialogue is to introduce the discussion, to which Eubolius and Proclus are now welcomed by Aglaophon, who explains that he and Sistellius have been arguing about whether the flesh receives incorruptibility along with the soul. Such an introduction as Theophilus does make, however, after initial exchanges on the importance of serious discussion in search of truth (I.1.4–2.6), is of some interest in itself. The purpose of such a discussion, he observes, is to set the teachings of the Scriptures regarding the human lot alongside the teachings of those who regard human

---

[11] For the sources of the Greek text of the *Aglaophon,* in *Adamantius,* Epiphanius, *Panarion* 64, Photius, *Bib.* 234, and more fragmentary sources, see Bonwetsch, *GCS*. See Deckow, *Dogma and Mysticism,* 352–58, on the textual problems relative to Epiphanius' quotation of the passage from Origen on Psalms 1:7. References here to the work by book, chapter, and so on, are those of Bonwetsch. The Slavic translation, which provides invaluable evidence of the dialogical early portions of the work, as well as of its more "systematic" later treatment of the views of Origen, is at points obviously somewhat abbreviated. It is the Slavic translation that is also responsible for the present, somewhat arbitrary, division of the work into three books.

[12] Lycian Patara is, as noted in chap. 1, one of the sites later suggested as Methodius' episcopal see, in our view chiefly because of uncertainty on the part of those who attempted to situate Methodius more precisely than their evidence allowed. The setting of the dialogue in the house of a physician is another of the reasons for speculation about Methodius' interest in contemporary medicine.

life as meaningless. The latter have succumbed to false wisdom and have given themselves over to evils out of ignorance of Providence. They have accepted a heretical "philosophema." What is at stake in the present discussion, then, is nothing less than the truth of Catholic teaching in contrast to these untruths (1.7–3.8). On this note, Theophilus calls for the presentation of the views of Aglaophon, which will afterward be developed further by Eubolius' companion Proclus.

Similarities between this introduction and that of the *De libero arbitrio* I.1–3 immediately come to mind, though in fact they have not commonly been commented on. The definition of the issue, followed by what is described as the dark look with which Aglaophon reacts to it (*De resurrectione* I.4.1), recalls the opening of the earlier work, with its contrast between the destructive Sirens' song of philosophy and the harmonious chorus of the Scriptures.[13] The issue, as Theophilus defines it, is free discussion of the claims of philosophy and those of the Gospel. Methodius has a similar view of what is here at stake in the discussion of the subjects treated in both works.

The Initial Discourses

The discourse of Aglaophon stands as the primary statement of the views of the opponents. Though the discourse deals with issues not raised in the *De libero arbitrio,* it is contrived, like that of the principal heterodox speaker of the earlier work, in a fashion that lays itself open to the charge of self-contradiction. Moreover, it proceeds from the root assumption of the former work that the body is the cause of the evil that besets the soul. Thus Aglaophon argues for the undesirability of a resurrection of bodies, which only give rise to the passions that divert souls from the good. In this connection, he offers scriptural evidence to show that souls were not originally embodied, since the

[13] The theme of the confusion wrought by the Sirens' song is repeated at I.27.1, when Eubolius describes his reaction to the conclusion of Proclus' discourse as one of trembling at the words he has heard; and the Sirens are actually mentioned once again just before this, as having nearly brought his opponents to shipwreck (I.26.1). The theme drawn from Clement of Alexandria plainly runs through Methodius' mind when he thinks of the diverting effect of Greek philosophy in contrast to the teachings of the Gospel.

"coats of skins" (Gn. 3:21) were bodies given to Adam and Eve after they transgressed the divine command. Further, the reference to souls as "prisoners of the earth" (Lam. 3:34) confirms that they are enchained in bodies as punishment for their sins (4–12); and the text "I was alive once without the Law" (Rom. 7:9) shows that Paul, who continues to refer to himself as now "carnal, sold under sin," and who asks to be delivered from "this body of death," embraced the same view. Finally, Jesus' reference to humanity destined to become "like angels in heaven" (Mt. 22:30) shows that souls will ultimately be freed from the flesh.

After a few brief exchanges Aglaophon's discourse is followed by that of Proclus, who again, as in the case of the second protagonist of the *De libero arbitrio,* is the companion of the orthodox speaker (in this case Eubolius) but enters the discussion in support of his heterodox predecessor. Here he develops a point already mentioned by Aglaophon, that the physical structure of the body is in a constant state of flux, so that its material preservation, even if it were to be thought desirable, is impossible (14–18).[14]

The Introduction of the Excerpt from Origen on Psalm 1:5

We shall return to these presentations shortly. With respect to the structure of the work, however, it is important to note that the excerpt from Origen's commentary on Psalm 1:5 (I.20–24)—which includes, among other things, Origen's speculation that it is the "form" (εἶδος) of the body rather than its constantly changing material elements that is raised—is introduced by Proclus at the conclusion of his argument (19), and is afterward interpreted by him as supporting it (24–25). Eubolius' reply to the initial arguments of both Aglaophon and Proclus, as already noticed, proceeds without reference either to the excerpt or to other passages later identified explicitly as containing the

[14] For indication that the agenda thus initially defined by Aglaophon and Proclus is a matter of contemporary interest, see Ps. Justin, *De res.* II, VIII, which describes as sophistical the notions that a resurrection of bodies is undesirable, and that the body is the cause of sins. On other references to the Ps. Justin work, see below, note 29.

views of Origen. Indeed, while scriptural passages taken from the excerpt are considered at various later points, the specific question of the resurrection of the bodily "form" and related arguments identified with Origen is delayed until very much later (III.1–4).

There is no doubt that the introduction of the excerpt from Origen, at the point at which it occurs, is appropriate in view of Proclus' argument concerning the constant change of the bodily structure. Methodius' procedure, however, with its long delay in discussing the contents of the excerpt, suggests that direct reference to the views of Origen was only added in a later revision of the work. But as this may be, the result of the inclusion of the excerpt at this point is to promote the notion that Origen himself taught that rational natures had once existed in, and were destined to return to, a disembodied state, in the terms advanced by Aglaophon and supported by Proclus. In fact, however, Aglaophon had not mentioned Origen in his interpretations of the scriptural references to the "coats of skins," the "prisoners of the earth," "I was alive once without the Law," and the "angels in heaven," and we now know that it is doubtful that, except in the last instance, Origen is their source. It is either from Methodius' own assumptions or from current reports of Origen's views that he had come to accept, that he is willing to allow the views set forth by Aglaophon and Proclus to be regarded as coming from Origen.[15]

[15] Origen notices the Valentinian interpretation of the "coats of skins" (Gen. 3:21) as bodies in *Sel. in Gen.* VIII.58 Lomm. and may have it in mind as a possible interpretation in *C. Cels.* IV.40. He cites the biblical image of "prisoners of the earth" (Lam. 3:34) against Celsus' reference to souls imprisoned in bodies at *C. Cels.* VIII.56, taking it simply as an anticipation of the freeing of souls by Jesus. Moreover, he twice attributes the interpretation of "I was alive once without the Law" (Rom. 7:9) to Basilides' view (the Latin transliterates δόγμα μετενσωματώσεως, implying that it is a familiar technical phrase) that the soul was once lodged in a different body (*Ad Rom.* V.1, VI.8), and at the latter place insists that the "I" refers to the soul, in which sin is lodged rather than in the body. And where he treats of humanity becoming "like angels in heaven" (Mt. 22:30), it is to suggest that souls will be like the angels in possessing spiritual bodies (*PA* 1.2.2) or simply that humanity will achieve a perfection equal to that of the angels (IV.4.2). These texts do not figure in any significant way in such evidence as we have of his own view of the embodiment of rational natures. Methodius has, at the very least, given these texts a prominence they do not have in Origen, and gives the second of them an interpretation that is at odds with Origen's

(footnote continued on next page)

The Views of Aglaophon

To return to the unfolding of the initial presentations of the dialogue, it should be obvious that the figure of Aglaophon, like that of the other participants, including Eubolius, belongs to the apparatus of the dialogue. They are not actual people, in the sense that Origen, and finally Methodius himself, become such when the dialogue gives way to more systematic argument.[16] Nor is this an unimportant point, since the presentation of Aglaophon is carefully contrived to contain the weaknesses that will eventually be discovered in it. Like the initial presentation in the *De libero arbitio,* the presentation here is, we may say, "set up to be knocked down."

Thus Aglaophon, in the interest of asserting that souls were not originally possessed of bodies, is made to argue two contradictory positions, each supported by what will eventually be shown to be wrongly interpreted scriptural texts. As a result of sin humanity was cast out of Paradise, encased in the "coats of skins," and made "prisoners of the earth." Thus they entered upon the embodied existence that gives rise to the lust, sickness, fear, and other evils that divert the soul from aspiring to, or even knowing, the good and the eternal. The soul, then, so long as it is embodied, is no longer free, as it once was, to understand its true greatness and form (I.4). If, on the contrary, embodied existence is good for the soul, and humanity was in such a state before the ejection from Paradise, it is impossible to

(footnote continued from previous page)

educational treatment of bodily existence, which is the point of his exegesis of it in his exchanges with Celsus; and the last of these texts receives, in the *Aglaophon,* an interpretation contradictory to Origen's view of souls as ultimately destined to possess spiritual bodies rather than to be disembodied.

[16] Crouzel, in "Les Critiques" (see above, note 6) appears to suggest, in his effort to establish that Origen did not interpret Genesis 3:21 and Lamentations 3:24 as he is, by implication, said to have done, that Methodius has in view the interpretations of actual persons. But to argue in this way is to mistake the genre of the work that we are particularly concerned to keep in mind. That Methodius "knits together" the inclusion of the excerpt from Origen with the rest of the dialogue by having Eubolius refer to his opponents as Aglaophon, Proclus, "and Origen" at the beginning of his reply to the initial discourses (I.27.2) does not fundamentally effect the point. If others held the views expressed by the principal protagonists, it is highly unlikely that they were called by the names here given them.

understand why Paul regards embodied existence as a punishment (Rom. 7:9ff.), or why it should not be the case that a return to embodied existence, such as a resurrection of bodies envisions, would not once again plunge the soul into the same difficulties that it encountered before. Happily, the Scriptures declare that souls will be "like the angels in heaven" (Mt. 22:30),[17] and thus in a state of blessedness and incorruption free from the flesh (I.5–7).

From this point on, Aglaophon turns to the subject of the essential mutability of the physical creation, soon to be taken up in detail by Proclus, and notices the view of Hippocrates that the human body grows and alters like a tree or other plant (I.8–9). He concludes by asking which body, among the many we possess in the course of life, will be raised, and in the case of baptized Christians whether it will be the body that was first baptized, that which was later excommunicated for sin, or that which was then forgiven, which will be the body ultimately subjected to judgment (I.10–12).[18]

The Views of Proclus

Proclus' entrance into the discussion, in the interest of enlarging on the latter aspect of Aglaophon's discourse, seems largely a literary device. The positions adopted by the two speakers are essentially the same, and may be set together for purposes of comment. Aglaophon has already referred to the medical evidence for the constantly changing structure of the body. Proclus now develops this argument, adding the analogy of a river to that of a tree, to make the point that the

---

[17] The conception of perfected humanity as being "like the angels in heaven" in the sense of being disembodied is, as we have seen, one that Methodius himself may have unwarily approached in his treatment of "going beyond the tabernacles" of the body in *Symp.* IX.5.254–55; and he may well have himself edited the text to say only that the perfected body will be "of angelic grandeur and beauty"; see above, chap. 3, Discourse IX, "The Final Consummation"; chap. 4, "The Tabernacle." But whether Methodius associated the notion that the angels are disembodied with Origen, at the time of writing or of editing the passage in question, or even at this point in the writing of *De res.,* is very hard to say.

[18] As we already noted, the discourse of Aglaophon is available only in the Slavic translation. It would be surprising, however, if, despite certain apparent omissions and abbreviations, the translation did not preserve the substance of the argument, which is in any case plainly the basis of the subsequent refutation of Eubolius.

elements composing the body, once they are returned to their several substances at death, cannot subsequently be reunited (I.14–15). It is, he suggests, as if the elements of the wax that is the basis of the work of a sculptor were dispersed with the breaking of the image: the effort to restore the integrity of the original work is impossible (I.16). Thus, if it is possible to speak of a resurrection body at all, that body must be of the spiritual sort to which Paul refers when he insists that it is a "spiritual body that is raised" (1 Cor. 15:44). But, he concludes, Eubolius will have considered the force of this argument already, and will understand the difficulties it presents (I.17–18). And it is at this point that, after noting other instances of scriptural teaching against a resurrection of bodies—most notably the escape of Jonah after he spent three days in the belly of the whale (I.18.1–3)[19]—he proceeds to introduce the name of Origen as a "man of the Church" who agrees with the views he has just set forth.[20]

Taking the argument of Proclus together with that of Aglaophon, the reader will not be at all surprised to notice the relation of both to the positions argued by the opposing sides of the *De libero arbitrio*. Thus Aglaophon makes much the same case for the origins of human evil as that made by the principal heterodox protagonist of the earlier work (III), while Proclus develops his argument against the perpetuity of the body on grounds similar to those advanced by the orthodox speaker of the earlier work against the independent existence of physical substances (VIII). Plainly, the matters at issue in the earlier work, including the central subject of a cosmological dualism as the explanation of evil, have not dropped from sight. Their scope has simply been enlarged to take account of a variety of matters bearing on the relation of that dualism to embodied existence and its persistence in the resurrection, as this had come into prominence in the course of the *Symposium*.

---

[19] The preservation of Jonah during three nights in the belly of the whale will be of importance as the locus for Methodius' discussion (II.15) of bodily existence as dissolved and restored in the passage of the intervals (διαστήματα) of time; on the intervals of time, see below, note 34.

[20] On the use of the phrase "man of the Church," already mentioned various times as used in reference to Origen, see below, note 36.

The Response of Eubolius

As we have already said, the response of Eubolius to the initial presentations of Aglaophon and Proclus, though it occurs after the introduction of the excerpt from Origen's commentary on Psalm 1:5, takes no account of the issues raised by the excerpt, even though Origen is now named among those to be opposed.[21]

Eubolius begins by calling upon Memian to assist him, so that the two opponents will be met on equal terms, and observes that it is their task to divert their opponents from being wrecked on the rocks by the song of the Sirens (I.28.1). In fact, as the scheme of the work unfolds, it is Eubolius who replies to Aglaophon's interpretation of the "coats of skins" and the other scriptural passages he has invoked, while Memian subsequently (II.9ff.) takes up the arguments of Proclus regarding the perpetual change of the bodily structure. In neither case, it is perhaps worth noting once again, does the teaching of Origen, as set forth in the excerpt from the commentary of the Psalter, figure in the discussion.

Eubolius' principal contribution begins with his engaging Aglaophon in exchanges that are designed to display the essential contradiction between his argument that souls are embodied because of sins committed in an earlier state, and that embodiment is itself the cause of the evils that divert souls from their destiny (I.29.1–7). Aglaophon concedes that if the soul sinned before being embodied, it is not reasonable to oppose the resurrection on his interpretation of the "coats of skins," since the disembodied soul would be capable of sinning again (I.29.8). Later he also concedes that since the purpose of a prison is education and justice, we cannot conclude that the imprisonment of the soul in the body is the cause of sin (I.31–32).

The truth of the matter, as Eubolius now shows, is that humanity does not sin in a disembodied state, since the scriptural account shows

[21] See above, note 16. Indeed, the Greek excerpts from here on refer to the orthodox speaker simply as "Methodius." However, a telltale reference of Aglaophon to his opponent as "Eubolius" at I.30.5, suggests that so long as the apparatus of the dialogue is maintained, it is Eubolius who is identified as the principal orthodox speaker.

that the human being is neither a soul without a body nor a body without a soul, but a "union of soul and body in one form [μορφή]," having been formed thus by God himself (I.34.4–5). Moreover, the human being, who was brought into being after the waters, the heavens, and the earth, was directly formed "from the dust of the earth" by God, who then "breathed into him the breath of life" so that he "became a living soul" (Gn. 2:7). The human being was thus made "according to the image" of God, and for this reason immortal, since God could do what even a Phideas could not do in his efforts to preserve his images: form an image not subject to destruction (I.35.1–3). Death came about, Eubolius pursues, because of free will (I.36), and then he enters on an extended explanation of temptation by the devil and the benign punishment of mortality—the true meaning of the "coats of skins," by which the human creation, though temporarily disrupted, is preserved from perpetual domination by evil.[22]

Eubolius on Sin, Death, and Resurrection

Anyone familiar with the views set forth in the *De libero arbitrio* will recognize, in the contents of the dialogue thus far, the recurrent similarities between its main considerations and those of the earlier work. In each case involvement with matter is rejected as the explanation for the cause of evil. In each the free will, taken in connection with the scriptural account of the temptation of humanity, is set in its place (XVI et seq.). Moreover, the notion that a cosmo-

[22] Methodius may well intend here to clarify, if not to correct, the teaching of *Symp.* VI.1, which appears to identify the soul alone as "in the image" of the Word, rather than the μορφή of body and soul. Very likely, however, it was from this passage that Gregory of Nyssa got the idea that Methodius regarded the soul as created later than the body; see below, note 52.

logical dualism underlies the views of the opponents is central to both works.

It is already apparent, however, that these themes are now developed in the light of the specific issue of the embodiment of preexistent souls, an issue that had not been considered before. The questions of the relation of sin to death, and of the eventual restoration of humanity to the state for which it was originally destined, appear in the background of the celebration of the ascetic life in the *Symposium,* but now emerge into the forefront of discussion.

Eubolius on the "Coats of Skins"

This revised agenda governs the extended exposition on which Eubolius now embarks in support of his interpretation of the "coats of skins" as the mortality given the body in consequence of sin. Here Eubolius expands on the earlier discussion of the envy of the devil (*De libero arbitrio* XVII–XVIII), referring to Athenagoras' description of the devil as an angel entrusted with the oversight of matter (*Supplicatio* XXIV), and noting that the angels, in the various spheres assigned to them, were possessed of free will and presented with the choice of obedience or disobedience.[23] In the case of the devil, it was

[23] It should be noted that Methodius does not here—or elsewhere—refer to Athenagoras, *De res.,* whose status as an authentic work of Athenagoras has in any case been generally questioned; see, e.g., R. M. Grant, "Athenagoras or Pseudo-Athenagoras," *Harvard Theological Review* 47 (1954): 121–29. But Methodius does subsequently deal with the problem, raised by Origen in the excerpt from the Psalter but present elsewhere in third century writings as well, of bodies being eaten by animals who may in turn be eaten by humans; and this problem is also treated in the Athenagoras treatise (IV:3–4). For this and other reasons, W. R. Schoedel, generally agreeing with Grant, argues that the work "is to be understood against the background of the debate over Origen's view of the resurrection" (*Athenagoras: "Legatio" and "De resurrectione,"* xxv et seq.). See also Runia, *Philo in Early Christian Literature,* 107, which accepts Schoedel's view of authorship, and specifically regards Origen as the source of the views attacked. Attribution of the *De res.* to Athenagoras is not without continuing support, as in L. W. Barnard, *Athenagoras: A Study in Second-Century Christian Apologetic* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1972), and B. Pouderon, *Athénagore d'Athène* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1989). But Schoedel's summary remark that "either Athenagoras anticipated in a remarkable way the theological developments of the later period, or the treatise is not by Athenagoras" (xxviii) seems hard to refute. In any case, though unmentioned by Methodius, the work may thus shed some light on the circumstances in which he came to interpret Origen as he did. See above, note 7.

his envy that led him to betray his charge over humanity, while those angels who followed him in disobedience conceived, in turn, the lust that led them to have intercourse with women (I.37). Thus humanity, self-ruling and possessed of free will, was led astray by the desire to do good and thereby deceived into breaking the commandment. Having turned from God in denial and disobedience, humanity was given "coats of skins," that is, the death of the body, not simply as a deserved punishment but so that the evil born in them might itself die (I.38).

After a series of remarks to the effect that the Scriptures show that Adam was "flesh and bone" before the giving of the "coats of skins," and after arguing that he was already given the command to "increase and multiply," which must apply to the body and not to the soul, Eubolius concludes that those who use allegorical interpretations to teach that only spiritual bones and flesh will be raised, or that the body of Paradise will not ultimately taste of the tree of life, do not understand the purpose of God in destroying evil by mortality (I.39–40).

Death As Antidote

In his continuing remarks, Eubolius turns to the point that sin continues to exist so long as the body lives. In this connection, he comments on Romans 7:18–20 ("I know that no good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh, since I do not do the good that I will . . ."), arguing that death is "the antidote of the divine physician" (I.41–42), and that, just as a statue that has been disfigured can be recast, so also can God recast disfigured humanity by melting and reforming it by death (I.43–44).

Eubolius then turns to those who associate death with a general conflagration of the cosmos, or who think that things created (references to such things as γεννητός are commonly used) are necessarily impermanent. Such a position, he insists, is not the teaching of the Scriptures, which speak of a "new heaven and a new earth," of the passing away of the present structure of the cosmos, and of a time when the "childish form" will give way to the "perfect humanity," in which there will be no "marrying and giving in marriage" (Mt. 22:30; Mk. 12:25). And he adds that there will then be no "be-

getting" (γεννησομένους), so that then we will indeed be, as the texts say, "like the angels." But this will be the case not in the sense of our being identical with the angels in the cosmic order, but of our being without change and decay, and thus repossessed of the "tabernacle" that had fallen down (I.45–51). All this, he insists, is said not of the soul, which Solomon says is immortal (Wis. 3:1–4), but of its dwelling, the "tabernacle" of the body (Am. 9:11), which is the object of resurrection (I.52–53).

The Three Laws

Finally, Eubolius treats the other scriptural passages brought forward by Aglaophon. He observes briefly that since souls cannot sin without the body whose pleasures cause its defection, the body cannot be a prison (Lam. 3:34) designed for sins committed in a disembodied state (I.54–56). At greater length he argues that the saying "I was alive before the Law" (Rom. 7:9) refers to life in Paradise before Adam and Eve's disobedience, since human beings—even the first-formed— could only sin if the soul were embodied and threatened by the passions: it could not conceive the lust that led to disobedience in a disembodied state. The struggle, then, between the good that is willed and the evil that is done is only intelligible if the soul is embodied before it is overwhelmed by the power of the flesh (I.57–II.4).

In fact, Eubolius concludes—taking a view similar to that of Origen himself (*In Rom.* V.10)—the Apostle teaches in Romans 7:21ff. that there are three laws: the law of the mind, which I would obey but do not; the law of desire, which arises in the soul when it is overcome by the passions rooted in the flesh; and the law of the members, which is the actual disobedience that occurs when the soul succumbs to fleshly desire, as it did when the divine commandment was first broken (II.6–8).

Eubolius' Discourse and the Purpose of the Dialogue

The significance of Eubolius' discourse—of which we can here provide only a brief digest—should be clear to any reader of the *Symposium.* In the course of replying to the specific texts relied on by

Aglaophon, Eubolius takes occasion, in ascribing evil to the misuse of free will and the domination of the passions, to revisit crucial scriptural themes, such as "becoming like angels" and "passing beyond" the tabernacle of the body, which might have been thought controversial in the earlier work. Moreover, Eubolius makes what is at least an allusion to the comprehensive plan of salvation, set forth in the *Symposium* I.2, when he says that it is through advancing from childhood to maturity that humanity finally achieves a degree of perfection in which the danger of subjection to the passions is finally left behind. The outcome is far more than a rehearsal of the argument of the *De libero arbitrio,* though the assumptions of that work regarding the dangers of a cosmological dualism remain close to hand. Methodius here restates, in the context of the argument against the embodiment of preexistent souls, his commitment to the resurrection of bodies free from the sin that now encumbers embodied existence.

Nor should it be overlooked that unless Origen is assumed to be a proponent of the scriptural interpretations embraced by Aglaophon, it is still by no means clear that Eubolius' discourse is specifically directed against Origen. The Alexandrian is nowhere referred to explicitly in the course of the argument. The excerpt from Origen's commentary on the Psalter, and with it the treatment of the resurrection of the bodily form and the scriptural interpretations accompanying it, is not here under consideration. It is certainly the case that Eubolius' views are inconsistent with Origen's on the relationship of free will and embodiment, and on the resurrection of the present bodily structure. Indeed, Eubolius' argument that the soul cannot sin except in an embodied state—though one which, as explicitly stated, is contrary to that of Origen on a crucial point related to the subject of embodiment—will subsequently become a matter of importance in Methodius' treatment of the excerpt from the commentary on the Psalter, where it will be set against the presumed implications of Origen' teaching regarding the fall of disembodied souls. For the moment, however, although the dialogue can plausibly be seen as responding to criticism of the *Symposium,* what Proclus has pointedly drawn attention to as the position of Origen is not yet at issue.

The Reponse of Memian and the Excerpt from Origen

When Memian now enters the discussion in support of Eubolius, it is to take up the views of Proclus concerning the transitory nature of the body—the views with respect to which Proclus has invoked the name of Origen. In fact, although Memian occasionally mentions Proclus by name, it is at this point that the attempt to maintain the dialogue form begins to give way to straight exposition even before consideration begins to be given to the substance of the excerpt from Origen.[24]

The Transitory Body

Memian begins by dismissing Proclus' analogy between the formation of the human body and the growth of a tree from the earth. Even in the latter case, the tree is nourished by but not made from the earth; and, Solomon says, the firstborn Wisdom of God makes constant provision for birth and growth (Wis. 7:21), and is able to "make, alter, and increase all things"[25] (*De resurrectione* II.9).

Proclus' additional analogy between the body and a river engages Memian's attention at greater length. That the body is composed of the four elements, and not from a general substance as Democritus and Epicurus teach, so that humanity is in fact a "small world" *(microcosmos),* Memian sustains by reference to the four living creatures of Ezekiel 1:10: while the elements are replenished and the body grows and alters, the essential bodily structure remains the same[26]

---

[24] We are, to be sure, increasingly dependent from this point on the Slavic translation, which may be partly responsible for the omission of dialogical exchanges at least in the early stages of Memian's argument. Nevertheless, an increasingly didactic tone marks the work from here to its end.

[25] Cf. Irenaeus, *AH* V.32.1. Parallels with and virtual citations of Irenaeus become increasingly numerous as the treatment of the bodily structure continues.

[26] The treatment of the four creatures has its closest parallel with that of Origen, *In Ez.* XIV.30, Lomm, though it contributes to a conclusion regarding the perpetuity of the bodily structure that is scarcely his. The added point, that the healing of the blind man by the application of mud (John 9:6) restores the balance of the bodily elements, is found in Irenaeus, *AH* V.1.2. On Methodius' reliance on Galen for this extensive analysis of the relation of the four elements in the bodily constitution, see

(footnote continued on next page)

(II.10). Moreover, if a member of the body (Slavic: "image") is cut off, it is not replaced, although it is the work of physicians to assist in redressing the imbalance of the elements and the humors which they cause (II.11–12). And he here adds, in reply to the question regarding which body is baptized, that if the body is not thus continually identifiable, we would indeed receive no baptism, since the "once cleansed body would have been replaced by another." Indeed, he continues, if the body is like a flowing river, so also must be the soul, which will therefore have no continuing consciousness, and will be naturally as mortal as his opponent regards the body to be (II.13–14).

The Tabernacle of the Body

Memian now turns to a subject not dealt with by Proclus, commenting on 2 Corinthians 5:1 ("We know that if the earthly dwelling of the tabernacle be destroyed, there is another dwelling not made with hands"). The Apostle, he says, here distinguishes between the earthly dwelling (ἡ ἐπίγειος οἰκία) made with hands, which is the present life of the body centering on the enjoyment of the flesh, and the tabernacle itself, which is said not to be made with hands—that is, formed by the pursuits of human life—but will be possessed by the soul at the resurrection. He elaborates the point by referring to our "groaning" in this present dwelling (2 Cor. 5:2), longing for that which is heavenly, and contrasts this state with our knowledge that we nonetheless "bear in our body the death of Jesus . . . so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh" (2 Cor. 4:10–11). In this sense the body is the "tabernacle" that will be the object of the resurrection, though we "walk by faith not be sight" (2 Cor. 5:7) and do not "see clearly what is beyond our darkened understanding" (II.15–16).

(footnote continued from previous page)

Schoedel, *Athenagoras* (see above, note 23), where attention is drawn to the contemporary significance of this line of argument as reflected in Athenagoras, *De res.* Gregory of Nyssa will later first reject the notion of humanity as "microcosmos" on the ground, intelligible in view of its Stoic use, that this notion treats only the physical nature (*De hom. opif.* XVI.1). Later, he will accept it as "taught by some wise men" (*De an. et res.* PG XLIV, 28BC), in the carefully qualified sense that it refers to both soul and body rather than merely to the physical constitution.

The passage is interesting in various ways. It is an amplification of a brief reference to the bodily tabernacle in Eubolius' discourse (I.51.5). But it also involves a revisting, and at least a clarification, of the treatment of the bodily tabernacle in the *Symposium* X.1–5. Here stress is laid again on not seeing clearly what is in store for us; but the distinction between the "dwelling of the tabernacle" and the "tabernacle" itself may well be intended to replace the earlier reference to our finally passing "beyond the tabernacle" when we follow Christ into the heavens.[27] Moreover, the related reference to "groaning" in this present dwelling is the first of various passages that parallel points made by Tertullian on the resurrection, and may suggest that Methodius' correction of his earlier work—if he is, as seems likely, correcting it here—was made with the help of other sources dealing with the theme.[28]

Memian on 1 Corinthians 15:50

It is at this point, however, that Memian turns to consider the classic text of 1 Corinthians 15:50 ("Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God"), which has already been mentioned by Aglaophon (I.7.4; cf. 12.9) as well as by Eubolius (I.61.3), and is referred to in passing in the excerpt from Origen (I.23.2). The text is too familiar a locus for debate over the resurrection to allow the passage to be counted as a reply to the views of Origen in particular.

Memian's treatment of the text (II.17–18) is a reworking of the long-established view that "flesh," which can be used in several

[27] See below, note 32, on the reinterpretation of *Symp.* X.1–5 on the Feast of Tabernacles. Like the reference to the soul as made "in the image" of the Word at *Symp.* VI.1 (see above, note 22), this passage of the *Symp.* is among those that may have been subjected to criticism, and in this case perhaps more clearly on the ground that it follows the views of Origen.

[28] See Tertullian, *De res. carnis* XLI, where the precise parallels to Methodius' treatment of passages not elsewhere given attention are too close to go unnoticed, though there remains no ground for thinking that Methodius knows Tertullian and may rely on a tradition known to both. But the matter remains a puzzle. Methodius' use of arguments found in Tertullian, already mentioned in connection with *De lib. arbit.* (see above, chap. 2, notes 4, 15, and 19), will continue to be noticed. See below, notes 29 and 41.

senses, here refers to the present life of corruption, as is indicated by the immediately following words "neither does corruption inherit incorruption," while Paul's reference to the Incarnation of the Word in the "flesh" of Adam indicates God's intention to restore physical embodiment as such. As Memian's treatment of the text develops, its similarity to the treatment of the subject in Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* V.9–13 (esp. 9.1–4, 10.2, 12.1, 13.2–3; cf. 14.1), is striking. Memian himself, however, in another of Methodius' infrequent references to other Christian writers (II.18.10), cites Pseudo-Justin, *De resurrectione,* rather than Irenaeus, in insisting that the flesh does not inherit but is inherited. Familiarity with the tradition as it also appears in Tertullian is evident here as well.[29]

Memian's peculiar emphases emerge when his treatment of the text is viewed against this background. Thus he begins his treatment of 1 Corinthians 15:50 by setting it in the larger context of 15:12–57 (*De resurrectione* II.17.3–4). The issue is really centered in the question: "if Christ is raised, how can some say there is no resurrection of the dead?" Memian thus notes the declaration that "the first man is of the earth, earthy, the other man is the Lord from heaven," and draws attention to the conclusion of the passage, "thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." The point that the victory over the "earthy" man is the overcoming of sin rather than of embodiment is then supplemented by reference to Christians as having "died to the elements of the world" (Col. 2:20), where the "world" does not mean the physical elements but the unrighteousness

[29] In fact, the theme of the body as inherited rather than inheriting is not found in the surviving fragments of Ps. Justin, but does appear in Irenaeus, *AH* V.9.4. However, other features of Ps. Justin—particularly the description of those who reject the resurrection on the ground that the body is corrupt and should not be restored, and that it is the cause of sin (Ps. Justin, *De res.* II, VIII)—are similar to those advanced by Aglaophon in his opening discourse (see above, note 14). Other references to Pseudo-Justin itself (II.16.10), and to its mention of the ability of God to produce the human body from a drop of seminal fluid (Ps. Justin, VII; cf. Methodius, *De res.* II.20.7) show his familiarity with the work. The language of Tertullian's argument that the risen Christ exhibits the new body of the resurrection (*De res. carnis* XLVIII) is distinctive enough to be noticed in connection with Methodius' remarks on the same point (*De res.* II.18.6–7). See above, note 28.

toward which human free will has turned. He also notices the double meaning of "flesh" in 1 Corinthians 15:50 as present in Genesis 6:3, where it is said that the Spirit will not remain in those human beings who are "flesh" (*De resurrectione* II.17.5–10).[30]

If Memian thus interprets the double meaning of "flesh," in 1 Corinthians 15:50, in relation to a discussion of the double meanings of "earth" and "world," he also prepares the way for a more far-reaching discussion of the way in which the conquest of "flesh," understood as "corruption," is effected through the work of Christ. After treating the text at length to this point (II.18.1–5), he insists that the replacement of "the image of the earthly" by the "image of the heavenly" does not refer to the possession of a spiritual body but to the restoration of the intended "image," noticing that the risen Christ is described as having the same physical structure (σχήμα) as ours (II.18.6–9). He then goes on to develop the argument that the purpose of the divine humiliation in assuming the body was not only to reveal God's intention to restore the body, made of the same substances as before, but to bring it to perfection, "adorned with Wisdom," so that humanity may become what it was conceived to be in the plan of God (II.20).

The Feast of Tabernacles Revisited

It will not escape notice that Memian has contrived to set the now traditional interpretation of 1 Corinthians 15:50 in a context that leads him to discuss the resurrection of Christ. The discussion not only stresses the significance of the text as confirming the reality of the resurrection of all bodies, but leads to a consideration of the perfection of the restored "image" of God in terms that echo the treatment of that perfection in the *Symposium* (IX.5). There the restoration of bodies is a prelude to their achievement of intellectual communion with God.

---

[30] We are here once again dependent on the Slavic translation of II.17, 19 for supplying the crucial context in which to read the Greek fragments of 18 and 20; these deal with specific interpretations of 1 Corinthians 15:49–50, but do not by themselves suggest the development of the argument toward its climax, in returning to the subject of the final perfection of humanity.

It is in continuing to revisit themes of the earlier work that Memian now goes beyond his earlier references to the resurrection as the setting up of the "tabernacle" of the body, to treat again the theme of the Feast of Tabernacles (II.21). While the Jews interpret the meaning of the feast literally, as if God were pleased with fruits, boughs, and leaves that wither, he observes, we know that the feast anticipates the setting up of our bodies at the resurrection, when they shall be raised from corruption to incorruption and given immortality and harmony (II.21.1–2).

After briefly describing the reality of this resurrection by referring to the language of Ezekiel 37:5–6, with its picture of the bringing together of bones, sinews, and flesh, Memian observes that the tabernacles that will be celebrated at the true feast will no longer die nor be dissolved (21:3–4). Moreover—after an interlude, in which he describes seeing an Agnos (or chaste) tree flourishing despite the fire on the rim of Mount Olympus, a volcano in Lycia, as if nourished by a never-failing stream of water (23.1–2)—he concludes that the body distinguished by chastity and righteousness will survive as an immortal image of God (23.3–6).[31] Thus, even though the body was not made of precious metals, but of the dust of the ground, it can be immortal because it was made in the image of God; in fact, the Word became incarnate so that "having fashioned a more divine image, he might raise it incorrupt, although it had been dissolved by time [χρονοῦ]" (24.1–5).

A comparison between the treatment of the Feast of Tabernacles here and in the *Symposium,* like that of the bodily tabernacle already mentioned, is instructive. In contrast to the earlier work, less emphasis is given here to the perfection of souls that the restoration of bodies heralds. This, no doubt, is quite natural in view of the different purpose of the discussion. At the same time, the treatment of the feast here is innocent of the elaborate reinterpretation of millenarianism that underlies its earlier appearance, and that despite the view that it is introduced, in both works, as a correction of Origen's repudiation

[31] One need scarcely note here the reference to the "agnos tree" in the garden of Arete in the *Symp.* praef, 11.

of millenarianism. Most important for our purposes, however, the earlier ambiguous reference to "passing beyond the tabernacles" toward the higher ranges of perfection is here lacking.[32] For whatever reason, though certainly very likely because of criticism of the earlier work on the score of its view of the resurrection of bodies, a straightforward assertion of the permanence and finality of the restored tabernacle of the body stands in the place of the discussion of the subject in the *Symposium*. This revisiting of the Feast of Tabernacles not only shows that Methodius has not departed from his earlier views of human perfection but also that he has clarified what we may presume to have been thought obscurities in the earlier work.

The Intervals of Time

A final aspect of Memian's argument returns to the point of the body's having been "dissolved by time. " This takes the form of a reply to Proclus' interpretation of the release of Jonah after three days spent in the belly of the whale as an example of scriptural teaching against the resurrection of bodies (I.18.1–3).[33] There is a profound mystery in the account of Jonah, Memian insists, since the three days that Christ spent in the tomb correspond to the three days that Jonah spent in the belly of the whale; and these in turn suggest the past, present, and future intervals (διαστήματα) of time, in which the body, currently tossed about as a result of its involvement in the sea of passion, is consumed. But at the resurrection of the third day, since there will then be no past, present, or future, bodies will be restored to a state of permanence (II.25).

The argument is difficult to assess in its context. But if we recall

[32] See above, note 27. I have dealt with the unlikelihood that Origen's distaste of millenarianism is a reason for Methodius' treatment of the millenarian aspects of the tradition of interpretation of the Feast of Tabernacles in my "Methodius' Millenarianism," *Studia Patristica* 24 (1993): 306–15. The reference to chastity as a characteristic of perfected bodies should allay the suspicions of Bonwetsch (*Theologie*, 107) that the *De res.* reflects a retreat from the asceticism of the *Symp.,* though the reference to chastity here, like other aspects of the treatment of perfection more generally, is plainly not the central consideration of *De res.*

[33] See above, note 16. Despite the obscurity of the Slavic translation at this point, the contention of Proclus regarding the meaning of the text is clear enough.

the extended discussion of the *Symposium,* where it is argued that the coming to be and the passing away of the physical world will cease with the fulfillment of the perfect number of humanity by procreation, and that the cessation of this process will be coincident with the restoration of the physical world at the resurrection, it may well be that Methodius is here revisiting and reformulating that view. Behind Methodius' reformulation may well be the prevalent philosophical notion that measurable intervals (διαστήματα) of time correspond to physical motion, and that these intervals will cease when such motion ceases.[34] If this is the case, however, Memian has here introduced an explanation of the restoration of bodies, as anticipated in the resurrection of Christ after three days, for which no ground has been laid in his earlier arguments, other than the general assumption that involvement with the passions is responsible for the disruption of embodied existence. It is to the references in the *Symposium,* particularly with regard to the cessation of physical coming to be and passing away coincidental with the completion of the perfect number of humanity by procreation (IX.1.238–39, cf. I.2.16–18) that we should probably look for a rationale for this argument. Even so, a connection between the notion of the restoration of bodies with the cessation of the intervals of time, and the stress, in Eubolius' explanation in the present work, on the giving of mortality as a benign punishment for Adam's disobedience, though not beyond imagining, is unfortunately lacking.

---

[34] The history of the use of the Stoic notion of time as the "interval" (διάστημα τῆς κινήσεως τοῦ κόσμου) to interpret Plato's enigmatic reference to time as a "moving image of eternity" has been the subject of no little study. See, e.g., my "The Conversion of Diastema in the Patristic View of Time," in R. A. Norris, ed., *"Lux in Lumine": Essays to Honor W. Norman Pittenger* (New York: Seabury, 1966), 93–111, but many other treatments elsewhere. That Methodius' use of the notion is a matter of importance in the history of early Christian treatments of time, as it relates to the phenomenon of physical coming to be and passing away, can be seen in its use by Gregory of Nyssa, *De hom. opif.* XXI et seq. See my "Diastema . . ." above, but also Brooks Otis, "Gregory of Nyssa and the Cappadocian Conception of Time," *SP* 14 (1976): 328ff., esp. 336ff. See below, note 59.

The discussion of this point, which effectively brings Memian's remarks to a close, concludes the series of steps by which the themes of the *Symposium* regarding the inevitable restoration of embodied existence are restated in reply to the views of Proclus, and set forth as a rational alternative to the view that the body is essentially impermanent. That the purpose of Memian's remarks, even more than of those of Eubolius, is to provide a clarification of the views of the *Symposium*—presumably in the face of the criticism mentioned in the *De cibis*—is clear.

The Criticism of Origen

It remains now to take up the direct criticism of Origen, to which the rest of the work is devoted, to consider its relation to the purposes of the work at large, and to discuss its significance in the development of Methodius' own contribution to the subject of embodied existence.

The criticism of the views of Origen, chiefly on the basis of the excerpt from the commentary on the Psalter, comprises virtually the whole of the third book of the *De resurrectione.* It seems to have been prefaced by a shift of speakers, presumably involving the return of Eubolius, who once again calls up the courage needed to refute the views of the opposition (III.1–2). However, little effort is hereafter made to maintain the pretense of a dialogue, and direct address to "Origen" at various points suggests that such pretense was abandoned.[35]

We have already raised the question of whether Methodius had the teachings of Origen in view in the earlier remarks of Eubolius and Memian, and have suggested that he had come, earlier or later, to think that Origen had accepted the assumptions that he regards as underlying the position he opposes throughout the present work. It seems clear, nonetheless, that no specific arguments of Origen have

[35] See above, note 11, on the arbitrary division of the work into books in the Slavic translation, and note 21 on the designation, in the Greek fragments, of Methodius as the orthodox speaker from an early point. In this case, the introduction of a new book 3 is obviously appropriate, and such evidence of dialogical exchanges as we have in what remains are of a purely formal sort.

thus far been subjected to criticism. Even though passing allusion has been made (II.21.3–4) to the vision of the reassembling of the bones in Ezekiel 37:5–6, which is mentioned in the excerpt, it is only now that the substantial arguments of the excerpt are directly addressed.

Eubolius (or Methodius, as it seems appropriate to call him now, in view of the recurrent identification of Origen as the opponent and himself as the respondent) opens his treatment of Origen's views with words that set the Alexandrian apart from other opponents in somewhat the same way as did Proclus when he referred to Origen as "a man of the Church" who held views similar to those expressed by Aglaophon and himself (I.19.1).[36] Thus Methodius now says, if we may trust the Slavic translation, that "it is not good to follow those who force themselves into a false position by twisting the meaning of the Scriptures," adding that even if an angel of God preached contrary to the Gospel (Gal. 1:8), he should not be listened to (III.3.1). He is not tempted to disagree with Origen, he insists, from any notion that he is rhetorically superior to him, or to oppose him for reasons other than truth (III.3.2–3). Origen thus remains in a special position as someone who is of great stature, but has been led astray by false teaching.

The "Bodily Form" and the Spiritual Body

Methodius' initial remarks directly address the two main points of the excerpt from the commentary on the Psalter introduced: the notion of the resurrection of a "bodily form" and the interpretation of 1 Corinthians 15:36–38 as teaching the resurrection of a spiritual body. In a passage that we have in Greek, he summarizes Origen's

[36] The phrase "man of the Church" (ἀνὴρ ἐκκλήσιαστικός) is not infrequently used, by Origen and others, to refer to authentic teachers of the Church, often in contrast to heretics. See, e.g., J. W. Trigg, "Origen, Man of the Church," in *Origeniana Quinta,* 51–56. Methodius' (Proclus') use of the phrase is thus ambiguous, since Methodius had come, at least by the time of treating the commentary on Psalms 1:5, to regard Origen as having become influenced by heretical views. It remains the case, however, that he views Origen as a teacher whose views deserve respect even where they diverge from the truth, and in that sense as a "man of the Church."

teaching as being that "the same flesh will not be restored, but that the form [σωμάτικος) rather than by its changing elements, and of the appearance of Jesus, Moses, and Elijah at the transfiguration as the manifestation of their bodily forms in a glorified state (III.4.1–5). The issue is thus, so to speak, "fairly joined" on the ground of the excerpt introduced much earlier by Proclus.[37]

Methodius contends that the "form" of which Origen speaks must be a permanent possession of the soul; but if Christ is indeed the "firstborn of the dead" (Col. 1:18), there is no resurrection of the bodily form without the flesh. Indeed, if souls do not lay aside the bodily form at death, it can scarcely be said that such a form is raised. Jesus, Moses, and Elijah were manifested to the apostles as they would appear at the resurrection; and this is a quite different matter from accounts of people such as Enoch, who were translated to heaven rather than being raised from the dead (III.5.1–10).

The point to which Methodius is headed in his treatment of the bodily form emerges more explicitly when he argues that the "form of the flesh" (ἐπινοία). He illustrates the distinction by reference to grains of wheat and barley, which can be separated

[37] This rehearsal of the main points to be addressed may be a further indication that the treatment of the excerpt introduced long before, but thus far neglected, reflects a later stage in the evolution of the work.

in act and subsistence, but are separated in thought only as one conceives of a separation of the qualities from the substance. Thus, it cannot be said that the form (εἶδος) as the original, but a different form appropriate to it (8–11).

It has long been noticed that this argument, which is crucial to Methodius' analysis and criticism of the excerpt from Origen, assumes a different notion of the "bodily form" (μορφή), so that the "form" of the body cannot exist apart from the body itself.[38]

It should not, however, be too quickly said that Methodius simply misrepresents—though he doubtless misinterprets—Origen on this point. Methodius does, after all, fairly represent Origen's view, insofar as he understands it, both in the excerpt itself and in the digest that immediately precedes the present argument. He doubtless misunderstands Origen's particular use of "form," and his argument against it is contrived to make Origen's view, as he understands it, patently impossible. But the fact of the matter is that Methodius simply takes Origen's notion of "form" as the equivalent of σχήμα or

[38] Current discussion of Origen's notion of a "bodily form" may be said to begin with H. Chadwick, "Origen, Celsus, and the Resurrection of the Body," *Harvard Theological Review* 41 (1948): 83–102. More recently, however, attention has concentrated not only on the sources of Origen's notion of δχημα or "vehicle" of the soul after death, see below, note 47.

μορφή, and thus doubts its adequacy in explaining Christian teaching regarding the resurrection in any other way than as the restoration of the present body.

Nor is the provenance of Methodius' own view in doubt. As developed with reference to the relation of qualities and substances, it brings to bear on the subject the same view of the inseparability of form and matter advanced in the *De libero arbitrio* against the notion that quality can be separated from substance, so that the one can be called good and the other evil.[39] And it is perhaps notable that the notion that God is the creator of forms independent of matter is among those views associated with the *Timaeus* which he warns against in the concluding exhortation of that work.[40] That Methodius may now regard Origen's notion of the "bodily form" as reflecting his acceptance of the cosmological dualism as described in detail in the earlier work must be uncertain. But there is no doubt that he treats Origen's teaching—both in this work and even more clearly in the later *Xeno*—as arising from an acceptance of basic elements of such a dualism. In any case, his concern in the present argument, however polemically contrived to Origen's disadvantage, reflects a direct difference of opinion regarding the notion of "form," as well as its usefulness in treating the resurrection of bodies. Such a resurrection as Origen proposes, whether of the "bodily form"—or, as he will soon say, of a "spiritual body"—falls far short, in Methodius' view, of being a resurrection in the scriptural sense.

---

[39] *De lib. arbit.* VII–VIII.

[40] *De lib. arbit.* XXII.10–11. We have argued in reference to that exhortation that it is not covertly directed against Origen, and see no reason to think that at that time Methodius had Origen's notion of the "bodily form" in view, nor was then familiar with the excerpt from the commentary on the Psalter with which he is engaged in *De res.* It has been noticed, with some bemusement, that Methodius describes the soul as having been given "an imperishable and immortal form [μορφή]" in the beautiful passage of *Symp.* VI.1.133–35 (see Musurillo, *ACW* 212, note 1). But it may be doubted that the word μορφή is there used with either the care or the precise sense with which Methodius uses it in *De res.* See chap. 3, notes 30 and 32.

The "Gnashing of Teeth" and the "Dry Bones"

Before turning to the subject of a "spiritual body," Methodius treats two principal exegetical points in the Origenist excerpt. These are the observation, developed from the reference of Matthew 8:12 to the "gnashing of teeth," that scriptural references to bodily parts as restored in the resurrection must be taken spiritually (III.7.6–8.7); and the contention that the vision of the reassembling of the "dry bones" into a vast army in Ezekiel 37:11–26 refers to the restoration of political sovereignty to Israel rather than to the resurrection of bodies (9.1–14). Unfortunately, the larger part of the treatment of these points is available only in the Slavic translation; and this is perhaps particularly unfortunate with respect to the first of the two points, since it is there that Methodius deals for the first of several times with the relation of the literal and spiritual meanings of scriptural passages (III.8.3).

Methodius' treatment of Matthew 8:12, and the larger issue that it raises regarding the function of the bodily parts in the resurrection, turns on the argument that Origen's view of a "bodily form" here leads him astray, since it is impossible for the "form" to be raised without its attendant members. Thus, Jesus, Moses, and Elijah appeared with their recognizable members, though in a glorified form, in order that "we may clearly recognize that we also will be raised in this body, and that this body will be glorified" (7.10–12). But the reference to the breaking and gnashing of teeth at the resurrection is a different matter, and one on which Origen does not take account of the spiritual as well as the literal meaning of the Scriptures. There are, after all, many references to such things as visible clothing in the kingdom, which must be understood in a spiritual as well as in a literal sense, and this is certainly the case where a spiritual breaking and gnashing of teeth is described (8.1–7).

Methodius' subsequent treatment of the vision of Ezekiel 37:11–26 continues the theme of the relation of the literal and spiritual meanings of the Scriptures. He does not deny Origen's point that the vision refers to the return of the people from exile (9.1–3), but he goes on to observe that this fact does not exhaust the meaning of the

prophecy. A close reading of the text shows that an actual reconstruction of human bones is promised; and what is pictured is beyond the bounds of literal interpretation, especially since it is clear that the restoration from exile by the Persians was not the final salvation of Israel, which was subsequently subjected to oppression by Alexander, by the "successors" in Egypt and Syria, and finally by the Romans who brought destruction on the nation at the hands of Vespasian (9.1–13). Thus, the reference to the restoration of the bones scattered in hell must refer to a more comprehensive restoration from destruction (9. 14).

It is worth noting that these passages from Matthew and Ezekiel are dealt with in the same order, and very generally to the same effect, not only by Origen and Methodius but also by Tertullian, in *De resurrectione carnis,* thus suggesting once again that a catena of disputed passages regarding the resurrection had long been the object of discussion.[41] But it is peculiar to Methodius to introduce here the question of the relation of literal and spiritual senses of the Scriptures. Moreover, while Methodius—at least as we have him in the Slavic translation—is unclear as to what the spiritual use of the bodily members themselves (as distinct from their being in glorified form) might be, it is peculiar to him to pass in review the events that show that the literal meaning of the return from exile cannot be the whole meaning of the vision of Ezekiel. This is a point that will be noticed as having no little importance of its own in view of the contemporary criticism of Christian arguments from prophecy.[42] But as that may be, it is clear that Methodius' treatment of the passages from Matthew

[41] See Tertullian, *De res. carnis.* XX–XXI and XXVII, with special reference to the spiritual meaning of the garments attributed to the risen life in the earlier chapters. The puzzle is the same one to which we have referred on more than one occasion. See above, notes 28 and 29, on parallels with arguments found in Tertullian.

[42] Indeed, while we are uncertain about the claims of Jerome that Methodius wrote against Porphyry, and the fragments of a work against him attributed to Methodius are today generally conceded not to be his, the detailed discussion of the larger significance of the Ezekiel vision comes as close as anything in Methodius' writings to a reply to Porphyry's arguments against Christian prophecy in his *Prophecy from Oracles (De philosophia ex oraculis),* if not his reputed work *Against the Christians.* See below, chap. 6, note 31.

and Ezekiel is very much his own in the particular respect of his raising in each case the question of the relation of the literal and the spiritual meanings of the passages in question. He is determined to insist, against what he understands to be Origen's view, that each passage has both meanings.

"Sown a Physical, Raised a Spiritual Body"

Methodius now turns to Origen's reference to 1 Corinthians 15:36–38, where a distinction is drawn between the bare seed sown as a physical body and the full grain that finally emerges as a spiritual body (III.10.4–11).[43] It is worth noting in passing that the treatment of the text, in Origen and thus in Methodius, follows the order of texts treated by Tertullian in *De resurrectione carnis* 52–53, though in this case discussion of 1 Corinthians 15:50 ("flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God"), already dealt with by Methodius in Memian's reply to Proclus, intervenes in Tertullian's work (48–51) before 1 Corinthians 15:36–38 is taken up. In any case, notwithstanding our perplexity about the extraordinary similarities between Methodius and Tertullian, here and in the earlier *De libero aribtrio,* the most likely explanation is that a standard set of texts, already reflected in the work of Tertullian, is treated in the excerpt of Origen, and consequently reviewed in the same order by Methodius. However, the puzzle is, in our view, far from being resolved from taking this "likely explanation."

Methodius' rejoinder to Origen, doubtless predictably, is that no distinction can be drawn between the seed as a physical body and the grain as a spiritual body: in fact the full grain, differing from the seed only in its husks, is arguably less significant than the seed itself (III.11.4–5). He then observes that the Apostle begins his argument by saying that what is sown cannot come to fulfillment before it dies (1 Cor. 15:36), so that what he really has in view in the analogy of the seed is the "returning more beautiful to life again in its time" of

[43] Methodius at this point refers to the argument regarding the seed and the ear as also found in Origen's lost treatise *De res.,* though we have no independent evidence to support this claim.

the dead body restored "by the command of the Lord" (6–10).[44] The point of this rejoinder is, of course, the same as that made earlier. Origen's distinction between the present body and the spiritual body of the resurrection is, whatever else is to be said about it, inadmissible as an interpretation of the scriptural evidence that it seeks to explain.

The Spherical Body of the Resurrection

It would be foolish to survey the summary observations that now follow under the heading of the "spherical" resurrection body, were it not that Methodius is the chief source, though very likely not the originator, of the later notion that this was the outrageous implication of Origen's questioning of the present bodily structure's function in the resurrection. In fact, however, Methodius' reference to a "spherical body" is only a passing allusion in the course of his raising a more serious question. If the resurrection bodies manifest at the transfiguration of Jesus, Moses, and Elijah are such only in appearance, he asks, and if it is simply the "form" of the body that is raised, may it not be that, instead of the present "form" made in the divine image, the resurrection body might as well be "spherical, or polygonal, or cubical, or pyramidal?" He plainly assumes that such a notion would be absurd, since it is beyond understanding that the body should not rise in its present form (III.1.1–3).[45]

---

[44] The passage is once again from the Slavic translation, so that the reference to the body returning "more beautiful in its time" cannot be taken with any certainty as referring to Methodius' earlier association of the restoration of bodies with the cessation of the intervals of time.

[45] The later assumption that Origen viewed the resurrection body as spherical in shape doubtless results, perhaps in no small part, from the influence of Methodius' ironic remark, as witness the preservation of the crucial passage of II.15.1–2 in Photius, *Bib.* CCXXXIV. See also Gregory of Nyssa, *De hom. opif.* XXI.3. Origen does himself, when mentioning kneeling at prayer (*De orat.* XXXI.3), observe that the reference to every knee in heaven and on earth bowing at the name of Jesus (Phil. 2:10) cannot refer to heavenly beings as having knees, since "those who have treated these matters have shown their bodies are spherical." But this is far from teaching that resurrection bodies are spherical, as H. Chadwick pointed out in "Origen, Celsus, and the Resurrection of the Body." The notion of the sphere as a perfect shape is, of course, too familiar in Greek thinking to need comment. See also A. M. Festugière, "Le Corps glorieux 'sphérōide' chez Origène," *RSPhTh* 43 (1959): 81–86, and J. Bauer, "Corpora orbiculata," *ZKTh* 82 (1960): 333–41.

Rather than delay over this piece of Methodian irony, it is more important to note that, in the course of the observations that follow, he takes up the more serious question of the character of the glorified body of the resurrection (III.16–17). To this end, he now adduces evidence from the Scriptures, such as the account of Moses' descent from the mountain (Ex. 34:29–30) and Daniel's reference to "shining like the sun" (Dn. 12:3), to show that the present body will not be changed but instead glorified at the resurrection (16.1–3). And he proceeds to locate the transformation as the "consummation" (ψύχικον) is the soul rather than the Holy Spirit (16.9).[46] The themes of the description of the final state in the *Symposium* IX.2–3 are evident here, though there is, of course, no recurrence of his reference to "passing beyond" the tabernacles to achieve it (IX.5).

Lazarus and the Rich Man: The Corporeal Soul

Methodius next considers Origen's treatment of the parable of Lazarus and the rich man (Lk. 16:19–31), not included in the excerpt on the Psalter but presumably drawn again from Origen's *De resurrectione.* In Origen's view, as here represented, the physical torment and repose of the two figures after death refers to a state of existence prior to the final resurrection. Methodius' response is simply to observe that Origen here concedes, presumably in contradiction to his

[46] This statement, included in a Greek fragment from a catena of 1 Cor. 15:44, is unusual as seeming at first sight to be an alternative to a Valentinian distinction of psychic from pneumatic humanity not otherwise treated by Methodius or imputed by him to Origen in this work. But cf. *Symp.* VIII.4.186, discussed in chap. 3, note 41. If it is a reply to Origen's speculation that the soul is a fallen rational nature capable of being restored to its spiritual character (*PA* II.8.3 [Ruf.]) it seems either to agree with Origen or to be irrelevant to the present subject.

own views as Methodius understands them, that the soul does in fact employ the body after death (III.17.1–8).

Obscured here, perhaps because Methodius does not grasp its significance, is Origen's speculation that there is a corporeal "vehicle" (ματος), simply observing that, if this were the case, the soul would have no need of a corporeal "vehicle" after its removal from the cosmos.

The main purpose of Methodius' reply to Origen, however, is to argue that the soul, if it were incorporeal, would not be susceptible to the passions, even though Origen himself assumes the contrary in his references to the condition of Lazarus and the rich man after death. On this note, he returns to his contention that the soul is always accompanied by a body which it informs and directs, and which will be restored in the resurrection. But he now adds that it is only the divine nature that is uncreated (λόγῳ θεωρητά]" (18. 1–6). And he concludes his treatment of Lazarus and the rich man by observing that, even if Origen thinks their souls, after death, possess bodies other than those they had before death, there is still no reason to think that they will not be restored to their original bodies at the resurrection (7–8).[47]

[47] On Origen on the τενσωματώσις for which Origen criticizes Basilides (see above, note 15). But the text of III.18.7–8 is partly derived from the Slavic and partly from a passage in Eustratius

(footnote continued on next page)

Methodius' argument for the "corporeal soul" involves a refinement—if not a correction—of his view expressed earlier in *Symposium* VI.1, where souls are described as spiritual realities created in the image of the Word. Such an argument as now appears was not, despite its Stoic provenance, beyond consideration in the philosophical discussions of the time. In Christian use, such an understanding of soul provides the background of Irenaeus' recurrent references to the soul as the informing principle of the body. Indeed, such an understanding contributes to Irenaeus' view of humanity as the union of soul and body, which Methodius takes pains to assert in Eubolius' reply to Aglaophon on the preexistence of souls (I.3.4).[48]

Whether or not this argument is another "clarification" of the views of the *Symposium* in the light of Methodius' review of issues concerning the resurrection, the broad distinction that he draws between the divine nature, which is alone "uncreated" (ἀγένητος) and thus alone noncorporeal and passionless, and all other things as corporeal and susceptible to passion, is more than simply a clarification. It establishes a principle that will be of significance both in the remainder of this work and in the *Xeno.* The extent to which his criticism of Origen on this and related subjects involves a misrepresentation of the views of Origen will be taken up when we turn to the arguments that now follow.

Disembodiment and Sin, and Conclusion

The remainder of the work (III.19–23) survives only in the Slavic translation, with the exception of a brief passage (21. 12) cited by Photius (*Bibliotheca* CCXXXIV). Even so, however, the bearing of this "remainder" on the conclusion of Methodius' criticism of Origen, and its place in the work as a whole, is not to be overlooked.

The basic argument of this section is that it is not possible for the

(footnote continued from previous page)

of Constantinople (Bonwetsch, 415). Methodius nowhere else so construes Origen's teaching regarding the spiritual body of the resurrection.

[48] See Norris, "Irenaeus on Soul." See also Athenagoras, *De res.* XV.2–7 among treatments of humanity as a psychosomatic unity similar to that of Methodius and closer to his time. See above, note 22.

soul to sin outside the body: even the serpent could not otherwise have caused Adam to sin. If the angels sinned, being without flesh, Methodius asks, how is it possible to think that souls will not sin again when they are possessed of spiritual bodies (19.1–4)? To this question, put rhetorically to Origen, the latter is made to reply that if souls do not sin they have no need for the present body, and will not sin again if the present body does not rise. To this Methodius responds that there is, then, no advantage for this body not to exist, or to be replaced by a spiritual body, since the angels sin (5–6). Moreover, he continues, those blaspheme who say that the hope that "all flesh shall see the salvation of God" (Lk. 3:6) is foolish, because it would include even fish and cattle in the resurrection. After all, the texts "by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified" (Gal. 2:6) and "I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh" (Jl. 2:28) show that "flesh" does not include animals, who are without reason and are not bound by the requirements of law and justice. Thus he charges Origen, who is now plainly in view, with failing to observe, in his treatment of "flesh," the exegetical principle that the Scriptures do not contradict themselves (20:1–4). He argues, further, that Origen is wrong to take the text "Christ died and rose again that he might be Lord both of the dead and the living" (Rom. 14:9) as referring to those who have both persisted and failed after baptism, insisting that the "dead" refers to those who have actually died physically and will be restored immortal at the resurrection (21:1–7). And, again, he applies (and this from the fragment of Photius mentioned above) the reference to the "dead" as the bodies, and the "living" as the souls, of those who will be raised (8–12).[49]

[49] One of the uncertain aspects of the Slavic translation is that Methodius here refers to his opponents, including Origen, as "they." Thus it is uncertain whether he means to associate Origen with the other opponents in the dialogue or more generally with such as hold views associated with the name of Origen. For instance, Origen does indeed raise the question about Luke 3:6 including other than human beings (*In Lk. hom.* 22.5 [Lomm]), and makes the point we have mentioned here about rationality, but without drawing the comprehensive conclusion attributed to "those who blaspheme." He also treats Rom. 14:9 as referring to the baptized (*Ad Rom.* IX.30), though without drawing the specific conclusions regarding the resurrection which are assumed here.

In a final, seemingly abbreviated reference to Origen's teaching, Methodius cites Origen as saying that it is the property of the body to be raised as a covering (of the soul?), but that the resurrection in which Christ is called "firstborn of the dead" is not the resurrection of such a body, "in which enlightenment cannot occur" (22).[50] At this point, the work concludes with a lengthy thanksgiving to God who has victoriously overcome the death brought upon mankind by the sin of Adam, has suffered so that we might be free from suffering, and has ensured that the mortal will become immortal. To this, Methodius adds the prayer that God will overcome the "sickness of our hearts," and allow us to be "enlightened," so that we do not succumb to the ultimate death.

This conclusion, perhaps naturally overlooked by commentators, is of some interest, since it returns to themes of the *Symposium* regarding the hope of believers of securing a place among those whose bodies will be restored perfect at the resurrection. But it is more important to note that these final sections continue to assume that Origen regards embodiment as the cause of the present predicament of souls. Even though Methodius remains relatively accurate in presenting Origen's teaching on the resurrection of a spiritual body, he seems once again to regard him as self-contradictory in his adherence to this teaching. This is, of course, the tenor of Methodius' prior treatment of Origen on the incorporeality of souls, and his discussion of its implications for what he regards as a self-contradictory explanation of the origin of sins. In fact, Methodius' understanding of Origen here identifies his views as, however ambiguously, similar to those set forth by Aglaophon and Proclus at the outset of the work, and thus as presupposing that a cosmological dualism is the explanation of the evils that beset humanity in its present embodied state. Origen is, as Proclus earlier described him, "a man of the Church"

---

[50] This may well be a further reference to Origen's speculation regarding the ὄχημα or "vehicle" of the soul (see above, note 47). But it is certainly possible to discern various forms of Origen's teaching in this passage, and its presumed abbreviation, and the lack of any specific response to what is simply once again implied to be an inconsistency, leaves moot the question of its bearing on Methodius' argument.

who has come, in Methodius' estimation, to hold views incompatible with Christian teaching—views informed by the assumptions of those who are the principal opponents of the dialogue.

Methodius, Origen, and the Opponents in the Aglaophon

We earlier noticed that the reference of the *De cibis* to the criticism of the *Symposium* which Methodius hoped to quell by his book "on the resurrection" leaves it unclear as to whether Origen initially figured either in that criticism or in Methodius' projected reply to it. While this question must remain without a fully satisfactory answer, a reading of the *Aglaophon—and* especially of its "clarifications" of the earlier work on such matters as the soul's being made "in the image of" the Word (*Symposium* VI.1), the final "going beyond the tabernacles" (IX.5), and the question of the literal meaning of all scriptural texts (X.2–3; cf. III.1)—certainly makes it likely that Methodius was aware of the imputation of his views to the influence of Origen at some time during its composition, and contrived to make it the vehicle of his response. That this happened later than the reference to the work as projected at *De sanguisuga* X.4 seems clear. That it happened after the present writing had begun, and coincided with the introduction of the specific reference to Origen, with the excerpt from the commentary on Psalm 1:5, and the subsequent change of the character of the work into a direct refutation of Origen, has seemed to us increasingly probable, as we have tried to show in our analysis of the present structure of the work.

Yet the *Aglaophon,* as we have it, has more than the teachings of Origen in view. Even if Origen was in fact a "latecomer" to the work, the *Aglaophon* brings together a variety of views on the preexistence and embodiment of souls, some at least patently of Valentinian and other gnostic origin, and subjects them to criticism on the now familiar ground that they assume a cosmological dualism as the explanation of evil, or in fact on the ground on which he had, already in the *De libero arbitrio,* distinguished philosophical teaching from the truth of the Gospel. It is in the course of addressing these views that

Origen has, at some point, been singled out as having succumbed to these same assumptions.

It can scarcely be denied that Methodius, by proceeding in this fashion, misrepresents Origen in a number of respects. He does not, in fact, attribute to Origen the views advanced by Aglaophon and Proclus—as later readers of his work would do; and it remains uncertain to what extent he is influenced by his own reading of Origen as distinct from his understanding of what Origen is supposed to have taught. But as this may be, his basic conviction that Origen succumbed to a dualistic view of evil disregards Origen's own insistence that the origin of evil lies in the rational rather than the physical nature.

Methodius, then, misunderstands the principal reason for Origen's speculations on the character of embodied existence. The fact is that Origen was as concerned as Methodius to say that the body will be raised. Origen's complicated arguments regarding the soul's possession of a more or less dense body do not involve a distinction between the physical and the spiritual body, as clearly Methodius implies that they do. Even Origen's speculation regarding the "bodily form," for which we are chiefly indebted to Methodius, is only one among Origen's efforts to account for the survival of the body despite the evidence of physical change: a problem that both he and Methodius seek to address in different ways.[51]

These points granted, however, one basic feature of Methodius' effort to counter the views that he attributes to Origen should not be lost from sight. His reply to Origen, as he understands him, requires him to state, with even greater emphasis than had been done in Eubolius' initial reply to Aglaophon, that the soul cannot sin except in embodied existence. This point, quite consistent with Methodius' views in the *Symposium,* though not specifically emphasized there, is now set directly against Origen's contention of a primary turning

[51] See above, note 5, on Origen's treatment of embodied existence. Of course, it is likely that Origen's conception of the survival of a "bodily form" had some influence on Methodius' own evaluation of Origen's views. Apparently, it suggested to him that Origen had come to think that the soul, since it is incorporeal, is consequently free from sin, though this is scarcely Origen's view.

of souls from God. As a result, it not only interdicts that contention but lays the foundation for the further discussion of the fall and restoration of souls, and of the place of human embodiment in the plan of God, that would be discussed in the wake of Methodius' criticism. In fact, it is this question that would be taken up by Gregory of Nyssa, whose analysis of the issues raised by Origen owes much to Methodius' criticisms. In this respect in particular, Methodius' treatment of Origen would have a significant influence on the later development of the issues that the Alexandrian had raised.

Methodius and Gregory of Nyssa on Embodiment

It will be appropriate, at this point, to note something of the extent of Methodius' influence on Gregory of Nyssa's review of the issues raised by Origen's view of embodiment.

It is easily recognized that Gregory alludes to both Methodius and Origen in each of his two major anthropological works, *On the Making of Humanity (De hominis opificio)* and *On the Soul and Resurrection (De anima et resurrectione)*. In each case, Gregory opposes Methodius and Origen rather oversimply as representing divergent views on the priority of soul to body (Origen) and body to soul (Methodius), in contrast to his own view that soul and body are created together.[52] But Methodius' influence, both on Gregory's interpreta-

[52] See *De hom. opif.* XXIX (*PG* 44, 233D), and *De an. et res.* (*PG* 46, 124AB). In the case of Methodius, Gregory presumably has reference to the treatment of Gen. 2:7 in the context of *De res.* I 35.1–3; see above, note 22. Gregory's two writings are, of course, of quite different sorts, however closely related. The first would appear to have been written in some haste, in the wake of the death of Gregory's brother, Basil, to say what Basil's unfinished *Hexaemaron* would have said regarding the sixth day of creation; it may have been intended in part to relieve Basil of suspicions of "Origenism" in his distinction between the spiritual and the physical creations and his reference to the latter as a "schoolhouse" of souls (*Hex.* I.5–6). The second is a slightly later dialogue between Gregory and his dying sister, Macrina. In fact, however, the two works, taken together, represent a progressive development of Gregory's views on embodiment, the reunion of humanity in both soul and body at the resurrection, and the final perfection toward which all are headed. Gregory presumably also has Methodius in mind when he criticizes the notion of humanity as a "microcosm" (*De hom. opif.* LXI. , 177D; cf. Methodius, *De res.* II.10.2, because of his concern that the Stoic

(footnote continued on next page)

tion of Origen and on his reworking of the issues of embodiment in its widest sense, extends far beyond these allusions.[53]

"On the Making of Humanity"

Gregory's *De hominis opificio* seems, at first sight, far from a likely place to find Methodian influence. After a review of the first five days of creation, to the point that the subhuman creation was formed and ordered to prepare the way for humanity (I–V), Gregory turns to the human creation on the sixth day on the note that it is the mind or rational soul that is made "in the image of the [divine] image," and sins only as a result of its acquiescence in the passions that arise in it in the conditions of embodiment (X–XV). The latter argument is certainly similar to that of Methodius, though it paves the way for a highly individual view of the context of human disobedience.

There thus follows the celebrated and difficult argument—which appears only in this work (XVI)—that God intended to create humanity embodied, but that, in view of knowledge of its disobedience and consequent punishment, also created humanity male and female, so that the human plenitude, the perfect number of humanity—and the true image of God—could be formed by the prolonged process of procreation, with its attendant physical coming to be and passing away, rather than in the virtually instantaneous manner in which Daniel 7:10 says that the angels procreate. Thus Genesis 1:26 first says of humanity "in the image of God he created him," but then

(footnote continued from previous page)

term implies that humanity is a small version of a cosmos composed of purely physical elements. In the later work (*De an. et res.* 28B; cf. 24C–28C), Gregory accepts the notion of the "microcosm" as appropriate where humanity is considered as a reflection of the spiritual and physical elements making up the cosmos as a whole. See above, note 26, on Methodius' use of the term.

[53] On Gregory's use of Methodius, see the works mentioned above, in note 10. The most extensive and detailed treatment of Gregory's specific dependence on Methodius' treatment of the resurrection is T. J. Dennis, "Gregory on the Resurrection of the Body," in A. Spira and C. Klock, eds., *The Easter Sermons of Gregory of Nyssa: Translation and Commentary,* Patristic Monograph Series, no. 9 (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1981), 55–80. J. Pelikan, *Christianity and Classical Culture* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1993) deals in grand fashion with the Cappadocians on the divine economy (see esp. chaps. 17, 18, and 20), but without reference to the influence of Methodius on Gregory of Nyssa.

immediately adds, "male and female he created them." It is not embodiment as such, but sexuality that is the consequence of the divine foreknowledge of sin.[54]

The Formation of the Image of God

Methodius' place in this subtle effort to revise the "Origenist" notion of an original creation of disembodied rational natures should not, however, be overlooked, especially where the final "image of God" is seen as the result of the cooperation of humanity in its formation by the process of procreation, an idea set forth in Discourses I and II of the *Symposium*.[55]

We certainly need not credit Methodius with being the sole source of Gregory's view that Origen held that souls were originally disembodied. The famous passage conflated by Koetschau from *De hominis opificio* and *De anima et resurrectione,* and included in his edition of *De principiis* at I.8.4, not only attributes such a teaching to Origen, but goes on to say that the "rationale" (λόγος) of his argument must include the descent of souls into the bodies of animals below the human level, which Methodius did not suggest that Origen taught.[56] The question of the formation of the "image" in which humanity is created is, however, another matter. In Methodius' work, to be sure, the theme of human cooperation in forming the image is developed with reference to Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria,[57] both of whom are known to Gregory. But there is no earlier place where the

[54] Among discussions of these passages, see Otis, "Cappadocian Theology as a Coherent System." It has perhaps commonly escaped notice that Gregory tends, in treating both Daniel and Genesis, to pay careful attention to the order of the text. In the case of Daniel he has in view the abrupt juxtaposition of "thousands of thousands, and ten thousands and thousands" as describing an immediate increase in the number of angels. In dealing with Genesis he takes seriously the abrupt transition from "in the image of God he created [humanity]" to "male and female he created them," as signaling God's initial purpose as immediately translated into reality in male and female form.

[55] See above, chap. 3.

[56] *De hom. opif.* XXVIII.250, *De an. et res.* 112C–113D. See Koetschau, *GCS* 22 (1913): 96ff., reproduced in Butterworth, trans., *Origen on First Principles* (London: SPCK, 1936), 72–74·

[57] See above, chap. 3, notes 11 and 12.

explanation of the purpose of procreation in the formation of the image, the notion of the perfect number of humanity, and the function of humanity in furthering the divine plan of salvation are combined so clearly as they are in the discourses of the *Symposium.*[58]

The Intervals of Time

The case for Gregory's use of Methodius, however, becomes even clearer when Gregory introduces the argument (XXII–XXIII) that the process of procreation, and thus of physical coming to being and passing away, must continue through the intervals (διαστήματα) of time that God has appointed to run coincidental with the increase of humanity. It is when these intervals cease that the physical order will no longer be subject to corruption, and the resurrection of the body free from passions, along with the beginning of the angelic life, will ensue. The argument here is without question that of Methodius: it is closely related to the notion of cooperation in the formation of the divine image through procreation, and shows knowledge on Gregory's part of both the *Symposium* and the *Aglaophon.*[59]

In stressing this point, we have passed over other aspects of this part of Gregory's work whose appearance in this context are hard to explain without reference to Methodius. This is the case with the inclusion of an argument regarding the work of the devil as accomplished by arousing desire for the seeming good (*De hominis opificio* XIX; cf. *Aglaophon* I.27). It is also the case when Gregory digresses to argue that matter is not coeternal with God, since to say that it is would lead to the supposition that there is a second "uncreated" reality beside God (*De hominis opificio* XXIII). Here in particular the digression is hard to explain except by reference to the reading of Methodius, and in this case to the Methodius of the *De libero arbi-*

[58] On the "image" in Gregory as an eschatological reality anticipated in the mind of God, see the still-valuable R. Leys, *L'Image de Dieu chez Grégoire de Nysse* (Paris: Brouwer, 1951), esp. 78–97.

[59] Gregory's argument, in fact, supplies the connecting link, which we do not find in *De res.,* between the notion of the intervals of time accompanying the process of coming to be and passing away necessitated by procreation, and the disobedience of Adam and Eve. On the subject of the διαστήματα, see above, note 34.

trio, or perhaps even of the *Xeno,* rather than of the *Aglaophon.*[60] But the treatment of the intervals of time doubtless deserves special consideration.

The Resurrection of the Bodily Structure

Beginning with *De hominis opificio* XXIII, Gregory turns his attention, in a seemingly abrupt and programmatic way, to discuss arguments in favor of the resurrection in a fashion that a reader of Methodius might think he had added with specific reference to the *Aglaopon.*

Gregory is certainly his own person throughout these final sections of the work. It is nevertheless true that he here argues that substances may be a combination of qualities without any material substratum of their own (XXIV); that the divine power to restore what has been damaged is greater than that of a human artisan (XXV); that the identity of the dispersed elements of the body are not lost (XXVI); that the structure of the body remains unaffected by the growth and diminution that it undergoes in the course of life, and that the soul is capable of recalling to itself the elements that originally constituted its bodily structure (XXVII).

Were Gregory's views themselves our subject, we should comment on the special features of his treatment of these matters in detail. As it is, we simply notice that his discussion of Lazarus and the rich man is less clear than Methodius' argument that certain physical elements remain related to the soul after death (XXV.11). Perhaps more important, he here uses, as he will not in the later work, the term "form" (μορφή (XXVII). In any case, our chief point is to observe that these sections cover much the same ground as Methodius' argument for the resurrection of the present bodily structure, and do so in a fashion that suggests the use of Methodius as a guide to the variety of issues at stake.[61]

---

[60] See above, chap. 2, on the argument against two "uncreateds" in *De lib. arbit.,* and below, chap. 6, passim, on the resumption of the discussion in the *Xeno.*

[61] Gregory's use of εἶδος here has been variously interpreted, with Daniélou

(footnote continued on next page)

"On the Soul and Resurrection"

The second of Gregory's two writings under consideration shows both a continuity with the teachings of the first, and a rethinking of its programmatic—perhaps even hasty—review of issues related to the resurrection. There is obviously much else that might be said about the work, a dialogue between Gregory and his sister Macrina at the point of the latter's death, that deals with a wide range of subjects having to do with the ultimate destiny of humanity in the plan of God. But it contains, nonetheless, a review of the issues treated in its predecessor, and one that bears the marks of a continuing engagement with the agenda of Methodius. In this sense, it may be regarded as the second of Gregory's works in which the influence of Methodius is to be discerned.

The Relation of the Soul, the Body, and the Passions

In this connection, it is important to note that, in the early sections of the work, the question raised by the two speakers is that of the place of the soul after the dissolution of the body into the elements from which it was taken (46, 13A–20C). At this point, the dialogue criticizes the notion, ascribed to Epicureans and Stoics, that the soul is a physical reality dissolved with the body (21A). In the course of the discussion, Gregory reasserts his view that the soul is a created rational nature that is, precisely because of its lack of location, capable of permeating and animating the entire physical structure of the body. So, he now concedes, the notion that the human individual is a "microcosm" is justified, because it is a union of spiritual and physical elements (24C–28C) in which soul is related to body so long as the

(footnote continued from previous page)

suggesting that it reflects an effort to reconcile the view of Methodius with those of Origen (J. Laplace and J. Daniélou, *Grégoire de Nysse: La Création de l'homme* [Paris: Cerf, 1943], 209, note 1). But Dennis ("Gregory on the Resurrection of the Body," 59–60), who accepts Daniélou's suggestion, shows that Gregory's use of εἶδος, as the basis for the reassembling of the atoms of the body, is substantially different from that of Origen, and suggests, in turn, that the later abandonment of the term except, as we have noticed, as a reference to the bodily structure is an effort to avoid the imputation of being too close to Origen. See below, note 63.

latter remains in existence (29BC). As such, the rational nature, though different from both the "uncreated" God and matter, is "according to the image" of God (41B–44A). Indeed, this stage of the argument concludes, it is possible for the soul to remain in conjunction with the component parts of the body even when the bodily structure is destroyed (45C–48C).

It seems likely that Gregory has Methodius in mind when he criticizes those who regard the soul as physical, and that he has not retreated from his earlier view that it is the rational nature that is "according to the image." At the same time he has, for reasons of his own, argued for the permanent cosmological union of soul and body, and incidentally clarified the point at which the earlier work might be thought unclear: sexuality, rather than embodiment, is the aspect of human nature added by the creator in foreknowledge of human disobedience.[62]

In the sections that follow, Gregory introduces a lengthy discussion of the relation of the passions to body and soul, making a careful distinction between the rational soul or mind, which is truly "according to the image" of God, and the animal soul, in which the passions arise, which acts as a mediator between soul and body (57B–60C). The human problem consists in a struggle between the mind and the animal soul, in the interest of directing the latter away from vice and toward virtue. This important discussion is of interest to us only indirectly. But it does continue Gregory's insistence, similar to that of Methodius, that the rational soul or mind does not turn from God by itself apart from the body, while at the same time distinguishing the relation of the mind and the animal soul in the careful fashion of Origen himself.

A Debate with Methodius

It is, however, in the remaining sections of the work that Gregory revisits the subject of the resurrection. And it is here that what we

[62] Though Gregory may here be critical of Methodius, he has at least accepted the notion of the "microcosm" in a fashion acceptable to him, and has withdrawn his earlier criticism of the notion as he thinks it appears in Methodius. See above, note 53.

may call his "debate with Methodius" over the subject becomes clear. Gregory asks how the soul is able to be present with the elements that once made up the body when the bodily "form" (εἶδος) has ceased to exist, now using "form" without the ambiguity attaching to it in the earlier work. He answers with the illustration of the painter, whose art allows him to recognized the colors whether they are mixed in a painting or not: so too the soul can recognize the elements of its body when they are dispersed (73A–76B). Thus it is that the soul is present with the elements that originally formed the body in the sense of being present with its own particular and not with merely similar elements, even when those elements are in an "unmixed" state (76C–77B). The argument, which is obviously designed to address the difficult question of whether the elements of the body return to their unmixed states, is intended to resolve a difficulty in the subject as presented by Methodius. And this is confirmed by the repetition of Methodius' illustration of the potter who can recognize the shattered fragments of jar that he has made (77B–80D).[63]

Gregory now returns to a closer examination of the account of Lazarus and the rich man, suggesting that, since the body is dispersed at death, the account must be taken allegorically. As a result of Adam's disobedience, two kinds of human beings are formed, one that interprets good as physical and is given over to the passions, the other that, aided by reason, struggles against pain in this life but is everlasting rewarded (80B–88C). Plainly, Gregory is here moving away from his earlier, almost point-for-point treatment of the scriptural passages borrowed from the *Aglaophon*.[64]

It is in the section immediately following that Gregory again con-

[63] It is notable that throughout these sections Gregory is wrestling with the subject of the identity of the bodily elements when they return to their original state, and is presumably dissatisfied, as Methodius himself may be, with the notion that the elements remain distinct; see above, note 26. It is notable that Gregory, though he has clarified his terminology in contrast to its use in the earlier work, continues here to refer to a bodily εἶδος rather than a bodily [illegible], perhaps suggesting that he does not attribute to the distinction of terms the significance they have for Methodius. On the question of Gregory's use of εἶδος here and in the earlier work, see above, note 61.

[64] Cf. *De hom. opif.* XXV.11.

trasts the views of Origen and Methodius on the priority of soul to body or body to soul, and, by allusion, pursues his criticism of each with a new clarity. While he here again sets forth his statement of the rationale (λόγος) of Origen's view of the fall of preexistent souls as extending to the point of teaching transmigration (113B–17C), he acknowledges that the basic issue is not whether there are two "uncreateds" but whether the body is essentially transitory, such that the same material elements that form the present body cannot be reassembled around the soul (108C–109A). Against Methodius' notion, as he understands it, of the body as having been formed before the soul, he employs Methodius' own analogy of the development of the tree and the ear of grain to show that the same power provides the nourishment that effects both their creation and development (125CD; cf. Methodius, above, III.10.4–11). Indeed, when Gregory adds that soul and body, which come into existence together, will continue together until the succession of births is brought to an end with the completion of the perfect number of souls and the emergence of a fixed plenitude of humanity, he reiterates his earlier version (*De hominis opificio* XXII.4–5) of Methodius' teaching regarding the process of coming to be and passing away (128AC).

The Resurrection Body

Gregory now turns[65] to the difficult question of the sense in which the bodies restored at the resurrection will be the same as those formerly possessed by their souls. Here his revised use of Methodius is everywhere clear. When the cosmos no longer admits of increase, the entire number of souls will be united with their bodies (129B).

[65] For convenience sake, we have thus far largely omitted reference to the work as composed of dialogical exchanges between Gregory and Macrina, abandoning the rule we established in treating Methodius' dialogues, since these exchanges in *De an. et res.* have not affected the substance of Gregory's references to Methodius. At this point, however, it is useful to note that the foregoing discussion of the views of Origen and Methodius, with its concluding reference to the eventual completion of the human plenitude, is attributed to Macrina. The section which we now take up, and which expands on the latter reference in what may seem a repetitive form, is attributed to Gregory. Pelikan, *Christianity and Classical Culture,* 8, notices that in the dialogue it is Macrina who argues the points that Gregory wants to establish most clearly.

This, he observes, is seen in scriptural references to the tabernacle, since the injunctions respecting the purification of the wilderness tabernacle point to the present impure life, while the proclamation of the final Feast of Tabernacles foretells the restoration of an incorrupt body at the resurrection (132A–35A). It was also foretold through the prophetic insight of Ezekiel, who looked across the present intervals (διαστήματα) of time and saw the restoration of flesh to the bones of the dead (136AB).

With Methodius still in view, Gregory now examines the difference between the present body and that of the resurrection as also hinted at in the Scriptures when they are read with insight.[66] It is said that the body is like a stream (141A), and that there is no need for parts of bodies in the resurrection (144B–45A). But the physical changes referred to—the body's continual diminishment and replenishment—are incidental to the true body. The processes of reproduction and sustenance, and all the changes that occur in the body in the course of life, are the "coats of skins" with which the body is presently covered (145B–49A). It is these "coats of skins"—which include conception, suckling, feeding, evacuations, gradual growth, sexual intercourse, old age, disease, and death—that will be cast aside like a garment at the resurrection. The body is only currently like a stream, and its movement will cease when the plenitude is achieved (149BD). In fact, the dissolution of the present body is good, since the corruption presently in the body is thereby destroyed, so that its tendency toward passion will not reappear in the resurrection (156AB).

Gregory and Methodius in Retrospect

It is a shame to omit here the grand and vastly influential vision of the final state of the fulfilled image of God in its eternal progress toward closer communion with the divine, which now intervenes in the midst of this discussion (149BD). But our purpose is to deal with Gregory's review of his earlier discussion of the resurrection, and his revisiting of the arguments he had there drawn from Methodius. It

[66] Macrina now takes up the discussion.

is clear that these passages in the *De anima et resurrectione* continue to rely on Methodius' arguments—both specifically with regard to the tabernacles[67] and the dry bones,[68] but more generally with regard to the formation of the human plenitude through the intervals of time.[69] Methodius is even to be discerned in the course of Gregory's subtle treatment of the difference between the present body and that of the resurrection, where his comments on the analogy between the body and a stream and his reinterpretation of the scriptural "coats of skins" offer his own replies to the arguments of Aglaophon and Proclus.[70] In this context, Gregory offers a different explanation of the"coats of skins" from that of Eubolius, and one that is intended to account for the aspects of present embodiment that will not be present in the resurrection.[71] In fact, Gregory here deals with a question that Methodius had raised, but which Gregory understandably regarded as insufficiently answered.

In short, Gregory continues to be indebted to Methodius for the reworking of issues relating to the resurrection in this second of his two main anthropological works. The notion that Gregory, in *De anima et resurrectione,* returns to a position similar to that of Origen is quite incorrect.[72] His view of Origen is substantially the one provided by Methodius. His refinement of his own views is the result of a review of Methodius' arguments in the light of his own criticism of what he thought to be Methodius' insufficient understanding of rational natures and his inadequate attention to the differences between the present body and that of the resurrection. His views are neither those of Origen nor of Methodius, but his own. But they are formulated in the light of Methodius' theological agenda.

---

[67] See *De res.* II.21.1–4; cf. *Symp.* IX.5.

[68] See *De res.* III.9.1–4.

[69] See *De res.* II.25.

[70] See *De res.* I.1–15.

[71] See Eubolius' argument, in *De res.* I.35–36.

[72] See above, note 61, together with Dennis, "Gregory on the Resurrection of the Body," 61–62.

The Aglaophon in Methodius' Writings

It is clear that the *Aglaophon: On the Resurrection* is more than simply Methodius' first criticism of Origen. It may, in fact, be both less and more than that. It is possible that the work was not originally conceived as a criticism of Origen. Nevertheless, as we now have it, the work is the vehicle for a fundamental analysis of Origen's view of embodied existence, and for a presentation of Methodius' own effort to provide an alternative to that view, as he understood it. In that sense it may be something more than his "first criticism of Origen." It is his formative confrontation with issues raised by Origen but not hitherto given the critical reflection that they here receive.

The result of that confrontation is clear. Methodius remains, in many ways, sympathetic with and dependent upon Origen's exegesis and its subtle, though not always clearly recognizable, theological contents. But the "Origen" whom Methodius has now discovered appears to him to have allowed himself, against his own principles, to be influenced by those whom Methodius regarded as committed to philosophical rather than Christian views of the nature of evil and matter. It will be this same "Origen" whose commitment to a cosmological dualism is subsequently attacked even more forcefully in the second of Methodius' criticisms, the *Xeno: On Created Things (De creatis).*

We have been concerned in this chapter to go beyond the subject of Methodius' treatment of Origen, which has so commonly been the principal interest of readers of the *Aglaophon,* and to consider Methodius' own theological views on embodiment as he developed them there. It is obvious that in doing so he was led to consider the very issues that had engaged Origen's attention, even though he was, by the time he undertook his criticism of Origen, far from recognizing the similarities between them. Thus Origen was as concerned as Methodius to locate the origin of sin in the soul rather than in the body, to regard embodiment as the place in which souls are tested in their progress toward perfection, and even to view final perfection as involving such embodiment as would be consistent with what we know of the mutability of the present physical structure. That there

were profound differences between them is clear enough, as is the fact that Methodius could easily read Origen in a way that he believed set them in direct and serious opposition to one another. But their curious similarities should not be overlooked.[73]

It is not unimportant to stress this point, as it bears on Methodius' influence, particularly in the case of Gregory of Nyssa. That Methodius' assessment of Origen's stand on these issues played the role in Gregory's thought that it did is scarcely intelligible apart from the agreement regarding the underlying issues that both he and Origen addressed. It is for this reason that Methodius' alternative approach to the issues the three shared became, through the work of Gregory, the point of departure for the rethinking of the problem of human embodiment in the thought of the preeminent theologian of the last part of the fourth century. This is a point especially worth making in view of the perhaps natural tendency to lay stress on the less scrupulous appropriation of Methodius' "Origen" by Epiphanius and others.

The Aglaophon and the Xeno

There is, as these allusions to Methodius' influence doubtless require us to mention, one aspect of his criticism of Origen in the *Aglaophon* that needs to be noticed in conclusion. For Methodius, Origen's fundamental problem is his seeming acquiescence in the kind of cosmological dualism as the explanation of human ills that Aglaophon and Proclus develop. And it is this "problem" that is presented there in much the same general terms as those put forward by the heretical opponents of the *De libero arbitrio,* with specific references to a preexistence of souls and their eventual restoration to a disembodied state being now added to the agenda of the earlier work. It is this comprehensive view of Origen that Gregory of Nyssa assumes, in large part because of the influence of Methodius, though also perhaps in the light of other contemporary interpretations with which he was familiar.[74]

---

[73] See above, note 5.

[74] See above, note 56.

We now know that Methodius was wrong to read Origen in the way that he did. But however intelligible his doing so may have been, and however consistent with his own preoccupation with a cosmological dualism as the central and absorbing difference between the philosophical tradition and the Gospel, it remains a crucial point for understanding his own thought no less than its influence. It was his "Origen" who provoked him to consider issues in his own earlier thought that he did not entirely understand were closer to those of Origen himself than he had come to believe. It is on this note that we turn to the last of the works to be considered.

Methodius, in short, was apparently not content to let his criticism of Origen rest with a review of the treatment of embodiment, and with such related issues as the preexistence of souls and their final restoration to a disembodied state. For reasons now lost to us, but perhaps not unrelated to his continuing preoccupation with the considerations already developed in his *De libero arbitrio,* as well as their bearing on matters dealt with in his *Symposium,* Methodius undertook to criticize Origen's teaching on the "eternal creation" of the cosmos as directly related to what he thought to be Origen's acquiescence in a cosmological dualism. It is to this further criticism, as developed in the dialogue *Xeno: On Created Things,* and to its place in Methodius' own thought, as well as in the background of the teaching of Arius on the eternal begetting of the Word, that we now turn.

6—
De creatis and the Later Criticism of Origen

When we turn to the Greek fragments that Photius has alone preserved from the *De creatis,*[1] we are confronted by a different set of problems from those we encountered in reading the *Aglaophon.* The work from which the extracts come is almost certainly the dialogue *Xeno: On Created Things* to which the historian Socrates refers.[2] It is also, in our view, quite certainly later than the *Aglaophon,* and reflects a further stage in Methodius' criticism of Origen. Origen is apparently here in view from the outset, and Methodius has no such uncertainties about his central position as those we have noticed

[1] Photius, *Bib.* 235. We have mentioned earlier the probability that the work is not represented in the Slavic translation because of concern that its views were similar to those of Arius; see above, chap. 1, note 13, on the suspicion of Arian "revisions" of the *Symp.* But the Photian extracts show no concern on Methodius' part to pass beyond criticism of Origen on the eternal creation of the cosmos to the subject of the eternal creation of the Word (see below, note 24). The division of the work into chapters used here is that of Bonwetsch, *GCS*, though in a few places it will be necessary to refer to sections within those chapters for the purpose of identifying the precise language of the text.

[2] Socrates, *HE* 6.13. The identification is accepted by Bonwetsch in *GCS*, 493, by Farges in *Idées,* 26, and by Vaillant in *De Autexousio,* 639. On the titles of the several works, see above, Introduction, note 17. The fragments are so limited that we cannot tell whether "Xeno" was the chief heterodox speaker or not. But the model of the *Aglaophon* suggests that this was probably the case.

while considering the composition of the *Aglaophon.* We shall see, however, that here once again the dialogical character of the work is such that we cannot assume that everything said by the opponents is intended to represent precisely what Origen taught, as distinct from what Methodius regarded as the logical implications of his teaching.[3]

The problems involved in treating this work arise, in the first instance, from the fact that there is no Slavic translation to provide the context for the surviving extracts of what was in all probability an extensive dialogue dealing with a variety of subjects, to many of which Photius only provides occasional hints. Photius' interest is in Methodius' criticism of Origen on the "eternal creation" of the cosmos. The little else that he happens to mention having read is more tantalizing than otherwise; and this is particularly the case with respect to the question of the coming to be or origination of the Word, with which we shall deal in due course. It is with the character of the Photian evidence in mind that we must approach the extracts for whatever light they have to shed on the work, and on its significance for understanding Methodius' thought.[4]

Photius' Report

In his extracts from "the work of the holy martyr and bishop Methodius on created things [περὶ τῶν γενητῶν]," Photius reports that

[3] Bonwetsch was wary of placing the writings in chronological order, and regarded it as quite possible that the *Xeno* was an earlier work (see *Theologie,* 9–10). But even if we put the evidence of *De cibis* regarding Methodius' emergence as a critic of Origen aside, the fact that the fragments of the *Xeno,* as we have them, show none of the ambiguity regarding the relation of the views of Origen to those of the speakers of the dialogue which we noticed in the *Aglaophon* suggests that the work from the outset was conceived as a criticism of Origen on the subject of "eternal creation." That such a criticism should have been written before the *Aglaophon* is difficult to believe—unless one takes the view that the earlier *De lib. arbit.* is a covert criticism of Origen, which we have argued it is not (see chap. 2).

[4] The substance of what follows is based on my paper "Methodius and Origen on Creation," in *Origeniana Quinta,* 497–508. That paper, however, does not treat the bearing of Methodius' criticism of Origen on the "eternal creation" of the cosmos on Arius' treatment of the "eternal begetting" of the Word, a subject I have discussed in "Origen, Methodius, and the Arian Dispute," *SP* 18 (1982): 912–23.

"Origen, whom he [Methodius] calls Centaur, says that the universe [ἀπροσδεής] divine being" (Bonwetsch II.1).

But Photius' "report"—which is all that it really is—is misleading on several counts, as his extracts show when read for themselves. Thus, it is not Methodius himself but one of the speakers of the dialogue who addresses an Origenist speaker as "Centaur" (VI.1), perhaps not for the first time and doubtless simply in the course of the exchanges Photius has preserved. Moreover the contention that "the universe is coeternal with the only wise and self-sufficient divine being" is not Origen's own, or even that of one of the Origenist speakers in the dialogue. Rather, it is a digest of the view that the Origenists and those who represent Methodius come, in the course of the dialogue, to agree to be the erroneous implications of Origen's teaching. It is, to be sure, more or less the position that the Origenists are led to reject. But it is a position nowhere expressly attributed to Origen, so far as the extracts bear witness, and is stated in quite different language from Origen's. It is, in fact, Methodius' own language, as anyone who has read the *De libero arbitrio* will at once recognize.

Photius' report is of some little interest in itself. Careful readers of his extracts will recognize that the calling of an Origenist speaker "Centaur" is part of the literary apparatus of the dialogue, and will perhaps suppose that the reference to this mythical figure, half-beast and half-human, is another of the classical allusions that Methodius makes to the views of his opponents, whether gnostic or Origenist, as unnaturally combining philosophical and Christian commitments. If so, it is similar to his use elsewhere of Clement of Alexandria's contrast between the death-dealing song of the Sirens and the harmonious chorus of the apostles and prophets. But it is equally possible that the reference has no polemical intent.[5] We must regret that Photius has not preserved more of the actual dialogical ex-

[5] See above, chap. 2, note 13. The Clementine reference to the Sirens' song (*Prot.* IX.12) appears in *De lib. arbit.* I.1.3, and is repeated in *De res.* I.56.5. But, in fact, Clement himself (*Strom.* IV.3.9) benignly refers to the human being as like the mythical centaur, combining both rational and irrational elements, soul and body, and needing to allow the former to rise above the lusts inherent in the latter.

changes which might allow us to understand just how this image—suggesting a hybrid background—is appropriate, if it is, to Methodius' view of Origen's speculations regarding the "eternal creation" of the cosmos.

The Scope of the Dialogue

Photius is not by any means the last reader to disregard the bearing of the style of Methodius' writings on the contents of his thought. As we have suggested, such persons are, if not legion, at least a goodly number.[6] Photius does, however, give us at least some impression of the scope of this work, not only in the dialogical exchanges on "eternal creation," which he sets out in some detail, but in the less extensive and sometimes seemingly random fragments which his own interests have led him to preserve. In the light of some general knowledge of Methodius' interests as reflected in his other writings, it is possible to tease out of these fragments what may likely have been some of the subjects, other than "eternal creation," with which the dialogue was concerned.

"Church"

It is thus worth noting Photius' reference (VIII) to Methodius' treatment of the etymology of ἡδονάς]." Whatever else the work may have said regarding "church," this interpretation of the root meaning of the word fits well with Methodius' view of the purpose of the divine economy as intending to free humanity from the bondage to the passions that threaten the soul until the human plenitude is achieved. We have already encountered the substance of this view in the *Symposium*.[7]

[6] See above, Introduction, "Methodius as a Writer of Dialogues."

[7] See above, chap. 3, on the treatment, especially in the *Symp.* VIII but also in III and VII, and indeed throughout the work, of the function of the chaste in leading the generality of Christians toward the perfection inaugurated by their baptism. The

(footnote continued on next page)

That Photius should have preserved only this small etymological point, for whatever reason, from Methodius' treatment of the Church in the dialogue is an illustration of the tantalizing problem of the lost contexts with which he has left us. But it is not idle to speculate that the theme of the divine economy for the perfection of spiritual and physical creation may have figured in this work, perhaps once again in contrast to any suggestion that the perfection of souls will be realized beyond the confines of embodied existence. At the very least, this small point tells us that the *Xeno* was fairly comprehensive in scope, and embraced more than the specific issues dealt with in the main body of the Photian extracts.

Origen's "Reserved Teaching"

Far clearer in its bearing on Methodius' criticism of Origen here is the initial set exchanges that Photius preserves (I) on the scriptural text "Do not give what is holy to dogs, nor cast your pearls before swine" (Mt. 7:6). Here Methodius is said to have opposed an Origenist identification of the pearls with the mystical teachings of the Scriptures, which cannot be understood by those "given up to impiety and pleasures" but have been "withheld and hidden from them." He is also said to have insisted that, on this view, "you say that no Christians can be converted from their impiety by the teaching of the apostles, . . . which is blasphemous [to say]." And he is reported to have argued, on the contrary, that "the deep and sanctifying teachings of faith in Christ" are open to all, and that the pearls are "virtues that should not be cast away to pleasures."

Even with no more than this suggestion of the direction of these dialogical exchanges, it is not hard to imagine what is at issue here in the light of Methodius' assessment of Origen's scriptural interpretation elsewhere. In the *Aglaophon,* Methodius rejects the notion that there are scriptural passages that have no literal meanings as inconsistent with proper principles of scriptural interpretation. In this view, acceptance of such a notion with respect to the passages having to do

(footnote continued from previous page)

recurrent appearance of the theme has much to do with understanding the purpose of the *Symp.*

with the resurrection of bodies shows that Origen had conceded belief in the goodness of the body, and sympathized with the heretical teachers with whose views he had become infected.[8] In the *Xeno,* it would seem that Methodius has gone further, and has come to think that Origen's notion of a hidden teaching in the Scriptures implies acceptance of a secret tradition recognizable only by a few, and "withheld and hidden" from the generality of Christians.

As to what Origen actually did say about Matthew 7:6, the *Commentary on Matthew* indeed takes the "pearls" to refer to scriptural teachings that are accessible only to those who know how to uncover them behind their literal meanings. But he identifies the "swine" with those "heretical teachers" (Methodius' "impious"?) who pervert those teachings altogether.[9] Such an interpretation is entirely consistent with Origen's general view that the Scriptures can only be read in the light of the apostolic tradition (παράδοσις), and that those who seek deeper meanings in them must follow its lead into their depths, which are open to all according to their ability, and not reserved exclusively to an elite few.[10]

Methodius has, then, once again treated at least a version of Origen's approach to scriptural interpretation in the light of what must now be quite clearly the assumption that Origen was led astray by gnostic views of a hidden meaning that is available only to a few. The implication of his reading of Origen—argued as usual in the interest of showing its contradictory nature—is that "no Christian can be converted from impiety by the teaching of the apostles." In fact, of course, Methodius' own view that the "deep and sanctifying teachings of faith in Christ" are available to all is in no way inconsistent with Origen's teaching.

At the same time, Methodius' alternative interpretation of Mat-

---

[8] See *De res.* I.39.2 and III.8.3. See above, chap. 5, note 8.

[9] Mt. X.8; cf. *Dial. Herac.* 150.

[10] See *PA* praef., IV.1.1. See especially R. P. C. Hanson, *Origen's Doctrine of Tradition* (London: SCM, 1954), chaps. 5ff. However, many other scholars have addressed this issue; their works have been surveyed in the unpublished paper of Brian E. Daley, "Origen's *De principiis:* A Guide to the 'Principles' of Christian Scriptural Interpretation" (North American Patristic Society, 1994).

thew 7:6 is one that is admirably suited to support his view of the Christian life as a struggle to acquire the virtues that protect the soul from the passions, as he had elaborated it at length in the *Symposium*. This is a point worth making, in view of the occasional assumption by modern scholars that Methodius' ascetic interest must have been tempered by the clarification of his views on embodiment in the *Aglaophon*.[11] This section of the dialogue, like the etymology of "church" above, speaks to the contrary.

The "Days of Creation"

Before turning to the subject of "eternal creation," we should notice a final, lengthier, and more frustrating set of fragments that stands last among the extracts. Here Photius reports (XII) that "Methodius says" that Origen, "having fabled [γένεσιν) and came into the cosmos from Adam. He then denies that the cosmos only began to be made "six days before the creation of Adam."

Photius then presents Methodius' reply, in what appears to be a catena of fragments of a discussion of the "days of creation." The catena begins with a citation of Psalm 90:2–4, "You are God from everlasting . . . [and] a thousand days in your sight are but as yesterday," to establish the familiar point that the days of creation are thousands of years. It includes a calculation of the number of these days: since there are six days before Adam, and six days from Adam until the present, the seventh day being the day of judgment, there are in all thirteen days of creation. And it concludes with the remark that before these days "they" (the Origenists) think that God had as yet created nothing, and "was denuded of being Father and Almighty." The catena appends a reference to "Origen" as denying that

[11] We have noticed that the fundamental structure of the view of the *Symp.* regarding the overcoming of the passions in preparation for the resurrection of bodies remains intact in the *De res.* See, for example, Memian on "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 15.50) in *De res.* II.17–18.

there are thirteen days of creation on the basis of Ecclesiastes 1:2, "Who can number . . . the days of the aeon."

Taken by themselves, and with Photius' references to what Origen or Methodius simply "said" disregarded, these fragments allow us a glimpse into what may well have been an important part of the dialogue. We have already noticed, and will shortly see in more detail, that the Origenist speakers concede that their views imply the eternity of the universe. We will also shortly see the central use made of Origen's argument that God is almighty only by virtue of having something over which to exercise authority. It is presumably the latter argument that is here in view, perhaps set forth in the course of contrasting the fictions of the Origenists and the realities of the scriptural account of creation.

It is unfortunate that Photius has left us no details of the Origenist argument at this point, since we have no reference in Origen himself—though he relies on Philo's hypothesis of a spiritual creation in the mind of God—to the creation of the cosmos without reference to the scriptural account of the days of creation, or to the creation of humanity without reference to the creation of Adam.[12] It is doubtless the case that Methodius would oppose any notion of such a purely spiritual creation along the same lines that he opposes, in the *Aglaophon,* any notion of a creation of the human μορφή without reference to both soul and body. But we can only speculate that the *Xeno* may have proceeded along these lines.

It is also unfortunate that Photius has left us no details of either the Origenist or Methodian treatment of the "days of creation." We can only imagine that the numerology of the thirteen days, which catches Photius' fancy, may have behind it a reworking of various aspects of the themes of the cosmic days required to bring the creation to perfection, and the intervals of time involved in the coming to be and passing away of the physical nature before that perfection is accomplished, which we have met in the *Symposium* and the *Aglaophon.* Without going further than this, we may observe that some such discussion would be the natural alternative to the supposedly

[12] See *In Gen. hom.* I.1.13; *PA* IV.3.7; *In Mt.* XV.31; and *De orat.* XXVII.13.

Origenist view of the eternity of the universe. What Photius has left us in XII, if the extracts roughly follow the order of the dialogue, may have been the climactic discussion of the contrast between the Origenist and Methodian treatments of the formation of the cosmos and its purpose in the divine economy.

"Eternal Creation"

For all their difficulties, the Photian fragments give us some impression of the scope and character of the *Xeno,* as it seems to have touched on the sources of Christian teaching, the nature of the Christian life, and the origin and destiny of the creation, as issues in a dialogue of some comprehensiveness. Nor do they leave us in much doubt as to the correspondence between the assumptions that Methodius here makes in criticism of Origen and the view that he ascribes to his opponents in the *Aglaophon.*

Nevertheless, Photius is chiefly concerned with Methodius' treatment of Origen's teaching on the eternal creation of the cosmos. He takes care (II–VII) to set down parts of the work which, however incomplete, preserve more of the actual dialogical exchanges and less of what "Methodius says," than is his practice elsewhere. These exchanges go a great way toward showing how Methodius had come to understand Origen on this subject, and how he contrived to set Origen's views within his own perspective.

There are two clearly recognizable aspects of Origen's treatment of things created (γενητόι) that have their origin through the Wisdom or Word. The second aspect, taken by Methodius to be inconsistent with, or even contradictory to,

the first, is that God is the "beginning [ἀρχή]" of all things, a term that Origen himself is at pains to define in an ontological and spiritual rather than in a temporal or material sense.[13] These two aspects of Origen's treatment of things created are closely related in the exchanges that Photius preserves.

In the first exchange (II), the Origenist speakers defend the axiom of the divine omnipotence by arguing that it must be that things were created "from the beginning [ἐξ ἀρχῆς]," and that "there was *no time*

[13] The clearest statement of Origen's treatment of Wisdom as , and that , is at *PA* I.2.9, 4.5; IV.4.1, and it would seem from the portions of dialogue treated below that it is these passages that Methodius has specifically in view rather than the more cautious treatment of things made through the Word as always existing in some sense (I.4.3–5). Origen's treatment of ἀρχή is also found in *PA* I.2.9, though its most careful and extensive elaboration is found at *In Jn.* I.16–22. It is scarcely possible to do justice here either to Origen on these points or to the extensive discussion of them in recent scholarship and writing. Briefly put, Origen's concern is to resolve the ambiguities in the writings of his predecessors regarding the peculiar nature of the origin of the Word in contrast to that of all other things (see above, chap. 4, note 17), while guarding against Sabellian and other views that do not allow for the separate existence of the second person of the divine triad. He thus stresses the spiritual nature of the origin of Wisdom and its consequent freedom from the materiality and temporality of all "created" things, so that the scriptural passages that refer to the creation of Wisdom can be interpreted without reference to these conditions. The elaborate treatment in the commentary on John of the several senses in which Wisdom is the ἀρχή of all other things proceeds on the same assumptions regarding the spiritual character of the "beginning" in question. An important point, which does not bear on Methodius' exposition of Origen's teaching, is Origen's subordination of "Word" to "Wisdom" in both the *PA* and the *In Jn.* and the inclusion of "Word," to that end, as one among the many names of Christ—presumably because of the dangerously physical connotations attaching to in contemporary philosophy. But the consequence of this argument is that Origen suggests, at least hypothetically, that since Wisdom or Word exists in order to serve as the source of all other things, those things must also be, in some sense, always existing. That Origen was aware of the difficulties of pursuing this notion is apparent, particularly in *PA* I.4.5. The reactions to this line of thought were, as all know, enormous, and led among other things to Methodius' questioning of the notion of "eternal creation" of the cosmos, as well as to his formulation of arguments against it that anticipate the views of Arius regarding the origin of the Word itself, as we shall see below. In view of the impossibility of setting out representative bibliographical references to current discussion of these issues, I mention only R. D. Williams, *Arius: Heresy and Tradition* (London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1987), sects. B and C, 117–78, as well as its extensive bibliography. Also see my own "Origen: His Place in Early Greek Christian Theology," *SP* 18 (1982): 924–43.

[Methodius' addition] when they did not exist [συναΐδιος] with God." The importance of the looseness of these references to "beginning" will soon become obvious.

At the leading of the orthodox speaker, the Origenists are then brought to admit (III–IV) that, since the divine nature is "perfect [τὸ ἀπέραντον). The assumption that God is sole "uncreated" is apparently uncontested.[14]

[14] If Photius is accurate, *Xeno* uses forms of γεννητός to refer not only to Christ but to the baptized (those "born" through the Word). Methodius

(footnote continued on next page)

Loosely connected with these passages is another, or parts of others combined (VI), in which it is further argued that if existing things were not "created" by God, God must have formed them from the elements (ἀμόρφον ὕλην). But to do this, the Origenists finally agree (VII), would be to devalue the work of God, much as if a sculptor could be regarded as doing no more than altering the details of a statue that had an existence of its own apart from his work.

We need pursue these exchanges in no greater detail than this to see that Methodius takes Origen's treatment of eternal creation as the occasion to criticize the cosmological dualism he had long identified as the philosophical ingredient in the heretical teachings of his time. Indeed, one can scarcely fail to notice that his treatment of the implications of the views of the Origenists here is strikingly similar, both in general and in detail, to his exposition of the views of the opponents in the *De libero arbitrio*. This is the case with respect to the catena of conclusions that the Origenists must draw if they do not accept that existing things were created by God—unless they are willing to say that God is merely the orderer of formless matter—and even with the clinching analogy between God and a sculptor. To be sure, Methodius makes no effort, at least in these extracts, to suggest that the Origenists attribute human ills to the soul's involvement with matter rather than to human freedom, as he does with the opponents of the

(footnote continued from previous page)

---

notes a distinction between things ἀρχή of their creation.

earlier work. Such an implication is, however, developed in the *Aglaophon* as an assumption of the teaching of the heterodox speakers, if not of Origen himself.[15]

There can be no doubt, then, that the *Xeno,* even more explicitly than the *Aglaophon,* interprets Origen's teaching in the light of what Methodius regarded as the pressing cosmological issue of his time. Of course, if one regards the *De libero arbitrio* as already a covert criticism of Origen, one is relieved of perplexity as to the rationale for Methodius' view, though one is then confronted with the still more puzzling fact of Methodius' reliance on Origen, without reference to these considerations, both in that work and in the *Symposium.*[16]

Methodius' View of Origen in the Xeno

There is no doubt that the Origenist speakers in the dialogue in no way do justice to Origen, either in what they argue or in what they concede. Origen does not say that spiritual created things are "uncreated," and holds as clearly as Methodius does that only God is "uncreated." Though Origen certainly takes "beginning" in an ontological rather than in a temporal sense, and this is a matter on which Methodius is himself of more than one mind, there is no contradiction in Origen's views of the sort that Methodius discerns.[17]

Nevertheless, something of the rationale of Methodius' view of Origen is not hard to uncover from the Photian extracts themselves, and follows quite logically on the view of Origen's teaching on embodiment that is offered in the *Aglaophon.* At the very least, the ex-

[15] The arguments and even the language of the two works are so similar that it is tempting simply to refer the reader back to the catena of possible views on the origin of the cosmos at *De lib. arbit.* XXIII.9 (see chap. 2, note 15), the general criticism of the notion of God as organizer of matter at V.2–5, and the analogy between God and a sculptor at VII.2–9. In fact, the whole texture of the discussion between the two sides is the same, except for the references in the *Xeno* to the specifically Origenist points about ἀρχή.

[16] On Vaillant's conviction that *De lib. arbit.* contains covert criticisms of Origen, and that this explains the parallels with the *Xeno,* see chap. 2, note 36.

[17] See above, note 13.

tracts from the *Xeno* show that Methodius is, from the outset, writing a dialogue that presents the implications of Origen's views as he himself understands them. While Photius' initial report of the position that Methodius ascribes to Origen is misleading, it is certainly the case that the Origenist speakers of the dialogue are expounding not Origen's but Methodius' views of what is at issue in the subject under discussion. The relatively few authentic aspects of Origen's own teaching included here—arranged to support the axiom that God is almighty only in virtue of having a coexistent cosmos over which to exercise authority, and thus to be inconsistent with the notion that God is the "beginning" of all things created—are scarcely treated in the interest of showing what they meant to Origen himself. In this respect, the work is not unlike the initial approach of the *Aglaophon* to the general issues on embodiment prior to the introduction of the excerpt from Origen's commentary on the Psalter. The difference is that here, so far as we can tell from Photius' evidence, the views taken up by the opponents are identified from the outset as those of Origen.

But the extracts show something else as well with respect to the treatment accorded Origen's views. When we look closely at the meaning that is given by all parties to the familiar Origenist language regarding "things created," we recognize that it is by no means inconsistent with the meaning such language commonly had in the philosophical circles of the time. Specifically, Origen's position is read as it might have been read by anyone familiar with the generally accepted interpretation of the cosmological picture of Plato's *Timaeus,* as we have it in Plutarch or Atticus, where the cosmos is seen as "created" in the sense of being organized in time out of preexisting matter. It is just this interpretation of the *Timaeus* that is employed by Methodius' opponents in the *De libero arbitrio,* where it has its chief parallels with the views of Hermogenes, as they are represented by Tertullian and Hippolytus.[18]

We ourselves are wont, in reading Origen, to notice the subtle ways in which he departs from this common interpretation, usually

[18] See above, chap. 2, notes 15, 16, and 18, on the contemporary treatments of the *Timaeus* assumed by the speakers of the *De lib. arbit.*

along lines similar to those of Albinus and others, but not confined to any one school of interpretation and dictated by his own explicitly Christian and scriptural purposes. Indeed, it is arguable that the result of Origen's work is to redefine the meaning of "things created" in such a way as to qualify its popular dualistic, or at least dyadic, implications, in favor of a view of God as the sole source of all that is, which has more than merely philosophical implications.

The Photian extracts show, however, that Methodius, rather than recognizing these subtleties, takes Origen's striking axiom that God is only almighty by virtue of having something over which to exercise power in the "ordinary" sense. Thus the axiom means to Methodius that, for Origen, created things were "made by God from the beginning," so that there "was [no time] when they did not exist," in a sense inconsistent with there being what Methodius assumes to be a temporal "beginning" of their creation. On this view, as the extracts show only too clearly, to be "always being created" is the same as to be "uncreated," which could only imply being and even owing existence to a matter coeternal with God.

Such a way of reading Origen is actually quite consistent with what we have already seen of Methodius' extensive reliance on Origen's scriptural interpretations throughout his works. A review of Methodius' writings prior to his emergence as a critic of Origen suggests that he paid little attention at first to those particular aspects of Origen's thought that are subject to criticism in the *Xeno* and in the *Aglaophon,* but that he eventually came to read them from the generally Platonic—and decidedly un-Origenist—perspective that they easily allowed him to do.[19]

Methodius' Treatment of the Word in the Xeno—and Arius

The remaining extracts in Photius (IX, XI) have to do with the place of the Word in relation to things "created." Indeed, these extracts are all that remain of Methodius' treatment of the status of the

[19] See above, chap. 4.

Word in the light of his understanding of the creation of the cosmos. Despite their brevity, however, they are worth looking at with some care for two reasons: first, they combine with other remains of the work to tell us about Methodius' own thought, and second, they offer insight into his influence on Arius, who may perhaps be described as a younger contemporary.

There are, Methodius is reported as saying (IX), "two divine powers [ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων] are adorned."

Here is a restatement of the view of the mediatorial Son or Word that we have seen implied and even specifically stated throughout the earlier writings.[20] It may roughly be called Origenist, not in the sense that it does not appear earlier in Justin and in Clement, but in the sense that its bold assertion here, without discussion or qualification, is closer to the position of Origen than to any other of Methodius' theological sources.

But Methodius is then reported as saying (XI), with respect to the verse "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Gn. 1:1), that "one will not do wrong who says that the 'beginning' [νεώτερα] than Wisdom, since they had their being through her."

This teaching, he now says, is also that of John 1:1–2 ("In the beginning was the Word . . . ,") since the "beginning [ἀνεβλάστησεν] is the Father and maker

[20] See above, chap. 4, "The Begetting and Becoming Human of the Word," with its references not merely to the *Symp.* but to *De sang.* VII–VIII ("The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows his handiwork," Psalms 18.2).

of all things," while "the words 'the same was in the beginning with God' show the authority which the Word had with the Father before the coming into being [δημιουργεῖται]."

Apart from the fact that we have here a final instance of Methodius' distinguishing the Word from the Father on the basis of superior and derived authority,[21] these extracts raise crucial questions regarding Methodius' teaching about the Word. It is hard not to read this description of Wisdom as ἀρχή without recalling Origen's extensive discussion of Wisdom as the ontological "beginning" of the Word (*De principiis* I.2.2–3; but esp. *Commentarii in Joanne* I.16–24). But what is the relation of the "beginning" referred to as Wisdom and the "unbegun beginning which is the Father?" And is "beginning," however identified, ontological or temporal, since "beginning" is presented here as the ground of all things, even though the things that came into being through Wisdom are said to be "more recent" than she; and some temporal implication is certainly present in the reference to John 1:2 that the Word is "that through which all things are constructed." Presumably we have here the same uncertainty with regard to the temporal character of what we may carefully call the "coming into being" of all but the ultimate divine that we have already noticed in the treatment of the begetting of the Word in the *Symposium*.[22] Nor is this an unimportant point, since so much of the criticism of Origen in the earlier extracts relies on taking "beginning" in a temporal sense, so that the notion of a coeternal "uncreated" reality, which the Methodian speakers attack, is said to be

[21] See above, chap. 4, "The Begetting and Becoming Human of the Word."

[22] See chap. 3, note 46, chap. 4, "The Begetting and Becoming Human of the Word." The fact that Methodius can speak of the Word as existing "timelessly" (διαστήματα) of time accompanying physical motion (see chap. 4, note 34). Arius can also speak of the Son as existing "before times and before ages" (see below, note 23).

inconsistent with other aspects of their opponents' teaching, since such an "uncreated" could have no "beginning."

Leaving these uncertainties aside, as incapable of clarification in view of the limitations imposed on us by Photius, it is hard not to see the remarkable similarity between the logic of Methodius' criticism of Origen on the "eternal creation" of the cosmos and the criticism that Arius was to launch against the "eternal begetting" of the Son or Word. In each case, the object of attention, whether cosmos or Word, if taken to be eternal, is regarded as being a second coeternal reality, compromising the status of the sole divine. In each case, the distinction between an "unbegun beginning" and the Son or Word as "the beginning of other things" is maintained. In each case, the teaching of Origen, as reflected in the use of his saying that there "was not when [it] was not," and in particular the temporal implications taken to be inherent in it, is the source of difficulty. And in each case the opponents hold that the basic issue is simply whether the subject in question, cosmos or Word, is uncreated or unbegotten, or from the uncreated or unbegotten, or from some other source.[23]

Thus there is good reason to think that the logic of Methodius'

[23] For the startling similarities of both thought and language, apart from the different spellings of ἀρχὴ τῶν ἄλλων in the letter to Alexander (*Ep. ad Alex.* IV, in Opitz, 12–13), see my "Methodius, Origen, and the Arian Dispute," *SP* 18 (1982): 912–23, esp. 917–19. See also my "The Creation of the Word in Methodius' *Symposium,"* 249, note 1. On the pattern of alternatives regarding the origin of cosmos or Word, as it occurs already in *De lib. arbit.,* see the reference to G. C. Stead, *Divine Substance,* in chap. 2, note 15. Stead elsewhere notes differences between Methodius and Arius with regard to the freedom of things created (or in Arius' case, "begotten"). But in fact the question of the freedom of created things is not an issue in Methodius' arguments in the *Xeno,* at least as represented by Photius, and its bearing, if any, on his criticism of Origen there is lost to us. See Stead, "The Freedom of the Will and the Arian Controversy," *Platonismus und Christentum: Festschrift für Heinrich Dörrie* (Munster: Aschendorf, 1983), 245–57, esp. 250, 252–53.

argument against Origen on the "eternal creation" of the cosmos foreshadows that of Arius' argument against the "eternal begetting" of the Word. In particular, it is the case that, for each, it is the assumption that things "created" (and for Arius things "begotten" as well) must have a temporal "beginning" that is central to the issue at hand. But more at large, the striking similarities between their discussion of the matters that concern them in more detail suggests that Arius may well be familiar with the development of Methodius' argument, and simply carries that argument to what he regards as its "logical conclusion."[24]

If this is the case, however, it must be said at once that Methodius does not carry his argument to the "logical conclusion" Arius does. On the contrary, slight though our evidence from the extracts may be, it suggests that Methodius most likely avoids speaking of the Word as "begotten" at all, though he had done so in the *Symposium,* but simply refers to the Word as that which "came forth [τοῦ πατρός]," which adorns the things that the Father has created (IX). The reference to the "hand" is, of course, an important one, reflecting, as it surely does, Irenaeus' description of Word and Spirit as the "hands of God," which Methodius uses elsewhere (*De resurrectione* I.35.4, 49.1; II.22.1).[25]

---

[24] These views, or some combination of them, have been argued before, most recently by R. D. Williams, in *Arius*, 167–74 (see above, note 13). Williams does not, however, take the step we have here taken in suggesting that Arius was actually familiar with Methodius' argument.

It should be noticed that if there are other parts of the *Xeno* that deal with the origin of the Word, but that Photius suppressed because of their similarity to the views of Arius, he makes no mention of them. Nor, frankly, does it seem likely that Methodius would elsewhere take a different line from that followed in the extracts that Photius does include. See below, note 25. The charges of "complicity in Arianism," if there were such, must have rested simply on the similarities of argument; see above, note 1. This point aside, however, these similarities are important to us, as Williams has shown, in studying the background of early Arianism.

[25] Irenaeus is, of course, not the only one to use the image of the "hands of God," though it may be said to have become something of a trademark. See J. Mambrino, "'Les Deux Mains de Dieu' dans l'oeuvre de saint Irenée," *Nouvelle revue théologique* 79 (1957): 355–70, on the uses of the image more generally in the period.

(footnote continued on next page)

Quite apart from this cautious language, it is certainly the case that Methodius' view of the divine priority in the working out of the economy of salvation, as we have seen it throughout the *Symposium,* would preclude him from carrying his criticism of Origen on the "eternal creation" of the cosmos to what Arius regarded as its "logical conclusion" with respect to the origin of the Word. The initiative in redemption is from the side of the divine reality, with which the Wisdom, Word, or Son is associated in his thinking. If there is a tension here between Methodius' view of the divine economy and his commitment to the generally Origenist notion of God, or Father, as the ultimately divine and the Son as the first of all "other things," Methodius resolves that tension from a different perspective from that of Arius. In the future, it would be increasingly difficult not to decide on one side or the other of these different approaches to the issue of the status of the Word. We may presume that Methodius did not live to be confronted with the problem.

We are in no way concerned here to enter the vexing area of the origin and rationale of Arius' thought, a subject of debate from the fourth century to the present.[26] Our intention instead is to suggest that Methodius' criticism of Origen on "eternal creation," with its particular insistence on God as the sole "uncreated," and its assumption that a dualism is implied where all else is not regarded as

(footnote continued from previous page)

For Irenaeus (e.g., *AH* V.1.3, V.1, VI.2, XXVIII.3, and *Dem.* XI) it serves to associate Word and Spirit with the divine side of the gulf between the divine and the created realms, even though he must himself agree with the Scriptures that say that the Word is in some unknowable sense originate; see above, chap. 4, note 17. The same image occurs to the same purpose in Athansius, *De decr*. VII, and stands among the similarities of terminology between Methodius and Athanasius appropriated from Irenaeus. See F. Boström, *Studier till den grekiska teologins frälsingsläre mod särkild hänsyn till Methodius av Olympus och Athanasius av Alexandria* (Lund: Ohlsson, 1932).

[26] See R. D. Williams, *Arius,* Introduction, "Images of a Heresy," 1–25, for a penetrating survey of the various estimates of Arius in the history of Christian thought, from the outset of the Arian controversy to the present. Williams' discussion of Arian issues throughout the work, together with its bibliography, is a useful introduction to matters currently in dispute. Necessarily omitted by Williams is R. P. C. Hanson, *Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy, 318–381* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark: 1988), a monumental study of the wider controversy in contrast to Williams' concentration on Arius and his earliest supporters.

temporal in origin, provides a basic clue to Arius' thinking. It is also our intention to suggest that, while Methodius was not alone in his general estimate of Origen's views, he was, in view of the specific similarities of the logic of their arguments and even their specific terminology, a very likely vehicle of the transmission of such criticism to Arius.

From the perspective of Methodius' view of Origen's teaching on the relation of God to creation, the evidence we have offered simply provides, in the first instance, another instance of his responsibility for the misrepresentation of Origen, as it was to influence the discussions of the century to come. Yet this same evidence also sheds important light on the development of Methodius' own thought on the subject of the divine nature which should not be overlooked.

Methodius on the Divine Nature

We may begin here by noting a final point that should be made about the evidence of Methodius and Arius, one which is not so easy to discuss in the specific fashion possible with regard to the doctrine of eternal creation but which bears directly on Methodius' view of the divine nature. That is, there is one crucial point at which Methodius, had he lived, might have been expected to side with Arius against various of the latter's supporters. Arius stands apart from the later "Arians" in his emphasis on the unique nature of the divine, and quite specifically on its "unknowability."[27] In this regard, the peculiar features of Methodius' view of the divine, both as set forth in the *Xeno* and as anticipated in the earlier writings, are not only similar to those of Arius, but reflect a common trend in the philosophical and Christian thought of the time which is by no means confined to the views of Arius himself but is present in others whose views are far different from his.

We have already noticed that the Methodius of the *Xeno* is pri-

[27] See Williams, *Arius,* part 3, A, B, and C, 181–229. See also T. A. Kopececk, A *History of Neo-Arianism, 2* vols., Patristic Monograph Series, no. 8 (Philadelphia: Patristic Foundation, 1979), 1: 24ff. on Arius and Asterius, but also discussed elsewhere in the text.

marily concerned to oppose dualistic or dyadic cosmological views, which interpreted the creation of the cosmos as, in some fashion, an ordering of a material substratum. This concern is, to be sure, already apparent in the *De libero arbitrio,* where Methodius goes so far as to suggest that there is no such substratum.[28] But it is in the *Xeno* that this concern is most clearly to the fore. Indeed, the basic misrepresentations of Origen arise from the conviction that the teaching of the Alexandrian reveals that, for all his merits, he had fallen afoul of such a dualistic cosmology. Methodius' distinctively different cosmological picture at every point determines the development and outcome of the dialogical exchanges that Photius preserves.

Thus there is, in the extant passages of the *Xeno,* one cause of all existence—"the universe [ἑαυτοῦ πλήρωμα]." To this cause alone all things owe their existence, though their having a temporal "beginning" in no way implies alteration or change in their divine source. It is precisely this assumption that the Origenist speakers in the *Xeno* are brought to acknowledge. And it is in the light of that acknowledgment that they come to agree to the inconsistency of the arguments that they have mistakenly advanced in favor of the coexistence of the universe with God.

Anticipations of this basic assertion that we have noticed in Methodius' earlier writings may be quickly revisited. In the *De libero arbitrio* XXII, in the final exhortation to reject cosmological schemes of the sort discussed with the opponents in that work, Methodius declares that, since God alone is responsible for the creation of the cosmos [ἀυτοσύστατος]. There is nothing else without be-

[28] See above, chap. 2, notes 18 and 21. Origen, as noted, is not himself unaware of the force of the arguments against the existence of a substratum (*PA* IV.4), though he finally concludes that one can be conceived in thought, if not ever encountered in reality.

ginning [δημιουργός] of substances. While this exhortation is a review of various elements of the myth of the *Timaeus* rejected by the orthodox speakers, its powerful emphasis, easily lost sight of when reading that one work alone, can now be recognized as an anticipation of the view insisted on in the *Xeno*.[29]

The *Symposium* supplies other anticipations. For instance, God is similarly described, at the beginning of Discourse VI, in the passage that proclaims that the "uncreated and incorporeal beauty, which is self-sufficient [ἐπόπτευσις) of the divine (13.208).

It is not, then, in the *Xeno* alone that we find the themes of the sole reality of the divine nature, of opposition to any attempt to qualify it by reference to a dyadic cosmology, and of the final communion with the divine as beyond knowledge. Nor are these themes set against the teachings of Origen alone, even though, in the *Xeno,* Origen's teachings are interpreted in such a way that he has become, in Methodius' eyes, responsible for denying their truth. We shall suggest in a moment that there are grounds for placing Origen in the position that Methodius' places him regarding dyadic cosmological thinking. They are not, unfortunately, the grounds that Methodius himself alleges. Methodius' grounds, however, may have been similar to those that led Arius to attack the notion of the eternal begetting of the Word, as Methodius himself did not do.

[29] See above, chap. 2, 46ff. This is, of course, one of the passages that Vaillant sees as covertly critical of Origen (see chap. 2, note 36). But we have long since argued that Origen is not yet at issue in *De lib. arbit.*

Sources and Significance of Methodius' Views

It is probably fruitless to attempt any assessment of the sources of Methodius' view of the divine nature, since it is most particularly characteristic of his own time. His description of God as "self-sufficient" [ἀπροσδεής]," has established the Sabbath rest as a withdrawal from evils, not for himself but as a preparation for the true first day on the part of those souls that "are enfleshed and susceptible to passions."[30]

Of this particular descriptive term, it is worth noting that it also appears in contemporary philosophical sources, in Porphyry and Plotinus, in connection with the ultimate reality that is beyond the grasp of the rational soul. But problems of chronology, the availability of philosophical sources, and uncertainty regarding the accuracy of Jerome's report that Methodius wrote against Porphyry, make it far from clear that he had any direct knowledge of these writings.[31]

---

[30] See also *Strom.* V.12.82 for an analogous reference, without the term in question, to the independent creative nature of God.

[31] Plotinus uses the term ἀπροσδεής to describe the intelligence that is beyond soul at *Enn.* V.9.4, while Porphyry uses the term of the ultimate reality at *Sent.* LX, and may perhaps do so as reported by Augustine at *De civ. dei* XIX.23. We must be wary of thinking that more of the *Enn.* were available to Methodius, other than those known to Eusebius (see J. M. Rist, "Basil's 'Neoplatonism': Its Background and Nature," in P. J. Fedwick, ed. *Basil of Caesarea: Christian, Humanist, Ascetic,* 2 vols. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1981), 1:137–220. Jerome's report that Methodius wrote a celebrated work against Porphyry is no more than that, though we have noticed a possible allusion to Porphyry's argument against the Christians in chap. 5, note 42. The surviving fragments of a *C. Porph.* are not commonly regarded as his, and in any case they have nothing to say about the subjects at hand. We have noticed similarities between Methodius' criticism of fate, fortune, and astral determinism (*Symp.* VI.14–16) and the treatment of these subjects in Alexander of Aphrodisias, *De fato;* see above, chap. 3, note 48. But while Alexander is certainly to be placed among those who read Plato in the light of Aristotle, and had strong reservations about earlier dyadic interpretations of *Tim.,* we have no evidence that Methodius refers to his views of the ultimate reality. Alexander is, however, perhaps the best example

(footnote continued on next page)

If one were to look for sources of Methodius' view among those writers, apart from Clement, on whom he habitually relies, both Irenaeus and Origen would come to mind, although in quite different ways. So far as Irenaeus is concerned, the notion that the divine is self-sufficient is not entirely unlike his view of the divine as the uniquely self-determining (αὐτεξούσιος), and that humanity is created in the divine image in the sense of possessing a reflection of that self-determination.[32] But however clear Methodius' use of Irenaeus at many points may be, he does not develop Irenaeus' peculiar correlation of divine and human self-determination.

With respect to Origen, things are different and far more complex. Origen speaks of the divine nature as the sole source of all that is, as on the horizon of human knowing, and as to be approached by rational natures only through moving to the limits of knowledge. In effect, Origen's thought on this subject can clearly be read as anticipating that of both the later Platonists and the Cappadocians.[33] On the other hand, Origen recurrently defines the end of the plan of salvation as fullness of knowledge of the divine; and it is this definition that underlies his speculation that there may have to be more than one process of turning away and return before this knowledge can be reached and sustained (*PA* III.5). Moreover, there can be no doubt that Origen, in explaining the eternal relation of the Father to the Son or Wisdom, and to the cosmos, as well as in his own treatment of the existence of matter, the eternity of the universe, and related subjects, still thinks within the framework of the earlier interpreters of Plato. In this respect, he tends to rely on the allegorical rather than the literal views of the myth of the *Timaeus*. It is on this score, though not on the grounds that Methodius alleges, that Origen is open to the criticism that he has not abandoned a dyadic approach to cosmological issues. In effect, Origen's approach to ontology and cosmology

(footnote continued from previous page)

of a contemporary philosopher of whose views on the subject Methodius may have had some knowledge.

[32] See Norris, "Irenaeus on Soul."

[33] This point has been made in many places, but perhaps nowhere more eloquently than in H. Crouzel, *Origen: The Life and Thought of the First Great Theologian,* chaps. 6 and 7.

was still that of a person schooled in the earlier Platonic questions of Plutarch and Atticus, Albinus and Gaius, however much he anticipated the later views of the school of Plotinus.[34]

Where does this leave us with regard to Methodius' view of the divine nature? It is simply that he is, once again, more than "the sum of his sources." For whatever reason, he stands out as an opponent of any use of a dualistic or dyadic cosmological scheme for the interpretation of Christian belief in the relation of God and humanity, the human predicament, and its ultimate resolution. He takes this view throughout his writings. It is, in fact, a thread that holds them together, whether it be in his general criticism of philosophical arguments for a cosmological dualism in the *De libero arbitrio,* his defense of chastity against false views of the renunciation of sexual relations as release from evil matter in the *Symposium,* or his criticisms—rightly or wrongly mounted—against Origen on embodiment and on eternal creation in the *Aglaophon* and the *Xeno*. In this respect, Methodius is to be identified with what has been noticed as a growing restlessness, both in philosophical and in Christian circles, with a dualistic cosmological picture of the sort with which Christians had been wrestling from the time of Justin Martyr onward.[35] He an-

[34] In this respect, Daniélou, *Origen,* remains particularly useful in its treatment of Origen's philosophical sources. Dillon's recent argument (see above, chap. 2, note 18) that the *Did.,* commonly attributed to Albinus, may in fact be the work of Alcinoos that it presents itself as being, does not fundamentally alter the picture of Origen's philosophical environment.

[35] See R. D. Williams, *Arius,* for a general treatment of the growing criticism of a dyadic cosmology at the time. Williams writes with the thought of Arius chiefly in mind, but is not unaware of the similarities on this score between Arius' views and those of Athanasius. The same point has been made by many others. See J. R. Lyman, *Christology and Cosmology,* esp. 15–17, 21, for a slightly different perspective on the same criticism, in both philosophical and Christian writers, with the issue of the "free will" particularly in view (e.g., in her references to Methodius, 102ff.). Her differences with Williams (161) aside, both offer important views of the same phenomenon. See also E.P. Meijering, *Orthodoxy and Platonism in Athanasius: Synthesis* or *Antithesis?* (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 114ff., esp. 126–32, on Athanasius' departure from a Platonic hierarchical picture of the cosmos, as well as his "**ΗΝ ΠΟΤΕ ΟΤΙ ΟΥΚ ΗΝ Ο ΥΙΟΣ:** A Discussion of Time and Eternity," in *God Being History: Studies in Patristic Philosophy* (Amsterdam: North Holland, 1975), 81–88, for a discussion of Arius which, while concerned with the clash between Arius and Athanasius, notices the similarities

(footnote continued on next page)

ticipates, at a fairly early time, the dissatisfaction that unites such seemingly different people as Arius, Athanasius, and the Cappadocians. Such dissatisfaction is reflected in a number of different, contradictory ways. Among these, as we have seen in this chapter, were Arius' attack on the notion of the eternal begetting of the Word on the ground that it made the Son a second "uncreated" reality over against God and yet also Athanasius' slowly developed insistence—against the later Arians—that the spiritual relation of Father and Son, defined by the ἐνεργείαι) alone, to things created.

In this large account, Methodius holds no small place. He was one of the Christian teachers who anticipated a revolution in philosophical and Christian thinking that he did not live to see. But his place in the early stages of that revolution is secure. His insistence that the sole "uncreated" divine being is the ground of human life, the clue to the understanding of the self-determination that is the cause of the evils that beset humanity, and the immediate and effective source of the redemption of humanity from its present condition of servitude to the passions for life with God in Christ, is a unifying theme of his writings. His tenacity in pursuing this theme is reflected in the curious variety of people whom he influenced, and not merely in the "heresiologists" to whom his influence is too commonly restricted.

In this chapter we have been concerned to say something about Methodius' likely place in the background of Arius' teaching on the "eternal begetting" of the Son, as in the previous chapter we dealt with his more demonstrable influence on Gregory of Nyssa's reflections on human embodiment. By Gregory's time, of course, the spe-

(footnote continued from previous page)

we have noticed between them, as well as (without mention of Methodius) the place of the notion of the temporality of all but the sole eternal divine in Arius' criticism of Origen. Some important light on this subject is shed by J. Dillon, "The Transcendence of God in Philo: Some Possible Sources," in *The Golden Chain: Studies in the Development of Platonismand Christianity* (*Aldershot,* Hants: Variorum, 1990), chap. 9.

cific matters treated in the *Xeno* had given way to larger considerations regarding the divine nature, sparked by reaction to the later "Arians" but involving wide agreement, among parties otherwise significantly divided over the status of the Son or Word, on a monistic rather than a dyadic approach to cosmological issues. It is now widely recognized that both Athanasius and Arius stand together, though in different ways, in their rejection of a mediatorial view of the Word as a figure in the dyadic cosmological scheme of the sort within which even Origen worked.[36] In effect, the position that Methodius had anticipated had become dominant. Nevertheless, his preoccupation with this cosmological theme throughout his writings, while less striking in its direct impact than his influence on Gregory on the subject of embodiment, is at least as important an anticipation of the new era of theological thinking that he foreshadowed in diverse ways.

[36] See, for instance, R. D. Williams, *Arius,* and Hanson, *Search,* as reflecting such agreement. The point is now too well recognized to require further bibliographical references.

Conclusion

In the end it may be asked whether it is important to expend so much time and space in trying to ferret out the substance of Methodius' thought. There is the usual—and doubtless justifiable—academic reason that Methodius is simply "there." But what is to be gained by threading one's way through a body of writing that, however fascinating it may be in itself to someone fascinated with it, is sufficiently complicated and problematical to make the task a laborious one?

We have already anticipated our answer to this question in the Introduction to this book. Methodius' writings constitute the largest body of Greek Christian remains, other than those of Eusebius of Caesarea, to survive from the latter part of the third century. They thus contribute much-needed evidence concerning the thought of the Church in the poorly documented period between the death of Origen and the outbreak of the Arian controversy, during which crucial issues of the fourth century took shape in reactions to and reevaluations of the thought of the century or so proceeding. In particular, they contain important evidence of the use of earlier writers, especially Irenaeus, Clement, and Origen, from that period, as well as hints of the ways in which they would be interpreted in the time to come. They are also, perhaps above all, the work of a distinct personality, who deserves to be remembered not only for his own sake but because such influence as he exercised on the theological course of events was directly related to his own particular reading of the issues of his time.

Yet Methodius has chiefly been read "incidentally," for the light

that the evidence of his writings sheds on issues only indirectly related to the substance of his own thought. In consequence, both he himself and the character of his influence have been obscured.

This is certainly the case with the general concern with Methodius as responsible for misinterpreting the teachings of Origen. Without doubt, Methodius' use by Epiphanius and others helped to create the erroneous "Origen" who was eventually condemned in 553. Indeed, we have been at pains not to deny, but even to enlarge on, his misinterpretations not only of Origen's view of the embodiment of souls in the *Aglaophon*—the chief source of interest for later "heresiologists"—but of Origen's view of eternal creation in the *Xeno.* But we have also been concerned to show that these occur in the course of serious engagement with the teaching of a person on whom Methodius had been and remained dependent. Indeed, we have tried to show that Methodius' own approach to the problems of embodiment as an essential part of the human constitution, and of the relation of God and creation, are not as far removed from those of Origen as is commonly assumed. Methodius was no simple "heresiologist."

But similar difficulties with the "incidental" Methodius arise in connection with the recent interest shown in Methodius as a teacher of Christian asceticism. The discovery of Methodius as a person sympathetic with the Christian asceticism of the time, and particularly concerned, in the *Symposium,* to address people for whom the legendary figure of Thecla was a likely model, has diverted attention from the role of chastity in Methodius' understanding of the place of the Christian life in the divine economy of salvation. Here we have been at pains to lay stress on Methodius' treatment of the ascetic life as related to the larger life of the Christian community, as well as to distinguish his view of true Christian chastity from the acceptance of any notion that the abandonment of sexual relations removes persons from involvement in an evil material world. Methodius' ascetisim is a catholic rather than a heterodox asceticism.

Similar difficulties arise with regard to the less widely discussed subject of Methodius' theological location, as that can be established by reference to the sources of his thought. Bonwetsch, Farges, and others have been right in seeing him as bringing together themes from

Irenaeus and Origen in such a way as to provide a basis for the treatment of these great writers by his successors. To be sure, the extent of his peculiar indebtedness to Clement of Alexandria, on which we have laid emphasis here, has largely been overlooked. It is a chapter in the largely unwritten history of the influence of Clement on later Christian thinking that should not be neglected.[1] The last word on Clement's influence, independent of that of Origen, has yet to be written. But the evidence of Methodius' continued use of Clement contributes to the particular subject of Clement's influence on the anthropological and theological thinking of Gregory of Nyssa among the Cappadocian fathers. To any future history of Clement's influence, Methodius will supply an important chapter. Even so, however, we are here short of considering what Methodius' sources contributed to his own thought.

The Methodius of the writings is not, in short, to be limited to any of the several uses to which we have commonly sought to put him in our efforts to identify particular features of Christian life and thought in his time.[2] This Methodius, in contrast to the several "in-

[1] See Introduction, note 13. One would have to reach back at this point to H. Pinault, *Le Platonisme de Saint Grégoire de Nazianze: Essai sur les relations du Christianisme et de l'Hellenisme dans son oeuvre théologique* (La Roche-sur-Yon: Romain, 1925) for a recognition of Clement's influence, as a conveyer of ideas of Philo, on the Cappadocian view of the unknowability of the divine nature, to recognize the significance of Clement's independent influence on the thought of the later fourth century. Brooks Otis was responsible for recognizing the importance of this influence, not only in his "Cappadocian Thought as a Coherent System," in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers, no. 10* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958), 97–124, but also in his "Nicene Orthodoxy and Fourth-Century Mysticism," *Actes du XII Congrès des Etudes Byzantines* 2 (1964): 465ff.

[2] We have not dealt, in the course of this work, with the notion that Methodius is to be associated with a distinct *Kleinasiatischen Schüle* characterized by a "realist" rather than a "spiritual" approach to understanding Christianity. This association has largely been made, it would seem, on the basis of his supposed millenarianism. See, e.g., F. Loofs, *Leitfaden zum Studium der Dogmengeschichte,* Part I: *Dogmengeschichte der alten Kirche bis zur Ausbildung der griechischen Orthodoxie,* 5th ed., rev. (Halle-Salle: Niemeyer, 1950), 175–79. Such a location, among conventionally designated categories of thought of the time, is frequently assumed in older histories of doctrine. But we have simply been at pains to show that Methodius' reworking of millenarian themes takes him out of the running as a member of such a school, should it actually have existed in the fashion once thought. Methodius' treatment of the Feast

(footnote continued on next page)

cidental" *Methodii* we have created, is one who was at root concerned to celebrate the sovereign divine reality that is the source of all things, and to insist that it is in human self-determination (αὐτεξούσιον) that the source of evil lies. It is in the context of these convictions that he develops his view of the divine economy of salvation as the preparation of humanity, freed from the passions that beset the soul, for a final, inexpressible communion with the divine. It was as a result of his recurrence to these basic convictions, in the midst of the variety of contemporary issues that he felt obliged to take up, that he exercised an unusual influence on the major theological issues and figures of the fourth century.

This book carries the subtitle "Divine Sovereignty, Human Freedom, and Life in Christ" not because these are items on a systematic theological agenda that Methodius was concerned to investigate, but because they reflect the recurrent preoccupations, brought to the fore in some cases more clearly than others, that inform his thinking despite the diversions—whether they be the issue of a cosmological dualism of philosophical provenance, the danger of a wrong estimate of the place of asceticism in the Christian life, or the challenge of Origen—that are the specific subjects of his writing. That his writing, itself, is in fact largely "occasional" should not be allowed to obscure their persistence in his thought, or their importance to its development.

With regard to the influence of Methodius' recurrence to his main convictions, we have inevitably drawn attention, if only because it has frequently been noticed in an "incidental" way, to his place in the background of two seemingly very different figures, Arius and Gregory of Nyssa, apparently far removed from one another in almost every respect regarding the relation of the persons of the Godhead and the way of salvation. But the concerns that at root determined

(footnote continued from previous page)

of Tabernacles is in the tradition of Clement and Origen, whatever the sources of his interest in Jewish interpretations of the feast may be (see chap. 3, discussion of *Symp.* Discourse X). In fact, the conflation of Irenaean, Clementine, and Origenist motifs serves as one piece of evidence to show the dangers inherent in such efforts to simplify the theological situation of the third century.

Methodius' thought explain his place in the background of these very different figures.

Methodius' relation to these two figures, as we have seen, is different in character in each case. With respect to Gregory of Nyssa, Methodius is the person through whom he "read his Origen" on human embodiment, and who proposed the solutions to the problems of the nature and destiny of embodied existence which Gregory refined in his two great works *On the Construction of Humanity (De hominis opificio)* and *On the Soul and the Resurrection (De anima et resurrectione)*. Gregory's substantial treatment of this subject is a virtual extension of Methodius' own views, clarified, modified, and elaborated in relation to the notion of the ultimate perfection of humanity in communion with God that each expressed in his own way.

With respect to Arius, Methodius' arguments against what he takes to be Origen's teaching regarding the eternal creation of the cosmos at the very least show the logic of the argument that led Arius to proceed to reject the eternal begetting of the Son or Word. While Methodius did not, so far as our evidence tells us, venture upon the latter subject, his formulations and even language are startlingly similar to those employed by Arius. He was—we may think happily—forestalled from going further than he did by his own conviction that the Word or Son was to be located on the side of the divine as distinct from the created order.

But these instances of Methodius' influence are not unrelated. In each case, he anticipated the demise of the "mediatorial cosmology" that Christians, from Justin to Origen, had assumed in their efforts to relate the ultimate divine being, the Word, and the cosmos. By the time of Athanasius and the Cappadocians, the rejection of such a "mediatorial cosmology" was the order of the day. But Methodius' place in the background of the thought of Arius, who himself rejected such a cosmological picture from his own peculiar perspective, marks Methodius' contribution to this important outcome of the theological debates of the fourth century.[3]

[3] See above, chap. 5, esp. notes 24 and 31. I have tried to survey the result of much recent work on this subject, as it bears on the unfolding doctrinal positions of

(footnote continued on next page)

In considering the great theological issues of his day, in whose formulation he had at least something of a preliminary hand, it is the real Methodius and not the "incidental" *Methodii* who must be looked at, in order to understand the source and character of his influence on their emergence.

Finally, and in a quite different vein, we may also suggest that Methodius may be worth considering not simply because he is "there" in the usual academic sense, nor even for the particularities of his thought and its influence, but because he was a Christian believer and teacher, who attempted to address the issues of his own time as he saw them, as Christians must attempt to do in any time.

Indeed, in our time many of the same issues that Methodius faced are once again before us. The difference between the divine and the created orders is once again at issue, though in a fashion that Methodius would not have recognized. The question of the cause of evil is likewise at issue, and human responsibility for the ills effecting the human condition is once more questioned, though again on grounds different from those that Methodius confronted. And, perhaps most important, the centrality of the place of Christ in a single divine economy of salvation, and the bearing of the Christian confession of faith regarding that centrality for understanding the life in Christ, is once again at issue. We may not ourselves come anywhere near to approaching these issues in the particular ways that Methodius did. But he may well cause us to reflect on the need to deal with them as firmly, and with the same willingness to distinguish between the Sirens' song and the harmonious hymn of the prophets and apostles, as he did.

I thought, when I began to read Methodius, that his writings would shed light on the theological history of the period between Origen and the Cappadocians. I have argued here that they do. But I have come of late to think too that Methodius' deepest Christian affirmations are of more significance for our time than I initially imagined I would think them to be.

(footnote continued from previous page)

---

the fourth century in my "Nicaea to Constantinople: The Theological Issues," *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 27, no. 4 (1983): 375–94.

Appendix 1—
The *De lepra* among Methodius' Writings

We have incidentally mentioned the dialogue *Sistelius: On Leprosy* when aspects of it have had a bearing on other subjects under discussion. It survives only in an abbreviated Slavic translation and as some Greek fragments, but the former and the latter combine to give us some notion of its original character and contents.[1] Although a relatively short work, it is written in the dialogue form. It opens (I.1–4) with the request from a servant of a certain Sistelius for Eubolius, who has been absent for a time, to call upon him. Sistelius' purpose is to discuss the interpretation of a particular passage of the Scriptures, the prescriptions of Leviticus 13 for the ritual treatment of leprosy. Sistelius, as here portrayed, is not a heterodox opponent, as are the main protagonists in the *De libero arbitrio* and the *Aglaophon*. Eubolius is plainly Methodius under his usual pseudonym.

Rough similarities between this opening scene and those of the two works just mentioned—and their free adaptation of the scenic apparatus of the Platonic *Protagoras*—have invariably been noticed by commentators. However, a subsequent shift in the course of the discussion (XIII.l) introduces a view of the Leviticus text taken by a certain woman of Sistelius' acquaintance. This literary touch may be a parallel to the introduction of Diotima in Plato's *Symposium* 201D. The facts, however, that the woman is a virgin, and that the Leviticus passage is reviewed by her for the light it sheds on the life of perfection as something required of the whole body of believers, suggests that the reference to the woman is more than a literary device. It is, as we shall see, related to the subject of the place of the chaste in the Church as treated in Methodius' *Symposium*.[2]

The central peculiarity of the work, if one may put it so, is that the dialogue, though it begins on a fairly grand scale, with a broad description of the importance of seeking the spiritual meaning of the Scriptures, thereafter focuses on the narrow subject that gives it its subtitle. It concentrates, despite

---

[1] As Bonwetsch indicates in his apparatus, *GCS* 451–74, the Greek fragments show that the Slavic translation is a considerably abbreviated version of the original. See Farges, *Idées* 30, note 1.

[2] See below, "The Occasion and Place of the *Sistelius*."

the usual passing references to a variety of other matters, on the spiritual meaning of the prescriptions of Leviticus 13. These prescriptions for the ritual treatment of leprosy, and the cleansing of all that is infected by it, are interpreted as references to the treatment of sin in the lives of Christians. According to Methodius, they deal with the means by which sin is dealt with in the interest of restoring sinners to the communion of the Church. In effect, the scriptural basis on which the subject matter is explored seems too limited for a dialogue of the sort that the beginning of the work might lead us to expect.

That the *Sistelius* is a work of Methodius is plain. That its contents have a variety of connections with his teaching in other works is equally plain. But its peculiarity remains, and gives rise to a variety of unresolved speculations. Assuming that what we have of it offers a fair representation of its contents, however abbreviated, we may ask: Is it a work that Methodius conceived on a broad basis—that of the spiritual interpretation of the Scriptures in general—and subsequently reduced to focus on only one aspect, however important, of current interest within Methodius' community? Or was it originally meant to deal with the issue of sin in the Christian life, and then reduced in scope to treat the particular questions regarding the reconciliation of sinners with which it is now concerned? Moreover, in what circumstances was the introduction of the subject of the relation of the chaste to the general body of believers, in however felicitous a way, related to the taking up of that subject, in a more comprehensive fashion, in the *Symposium*? To these questions there are no answers.

It remains the case that the work deserves to be considered in itself, as part of the Methodian corpus, as well as for the light it sheds on issues treated in other works.

The Course of the Discussion

Eubolius begins (I.3–4) by commending Sistelius for his concern to bring to perfection the knowledge that God plants in the soul. He compares the increase of the divine seed of faith, sown into the furrows of the soul, to the growth of the tiny mustard seed into a great tree—here employing the interpretation of Origen, *In Ex. hom.* I.1, that we have already noticed.[3] He proceeds to attack Marcion, in passing, on grounds that the text leaves a bit obscure, but which seem to involve the denial that there is a struggle of faith with the kind of evil that Marcion ascribes to something other than the true God (II.1–III.2).

Eubolius now—at least in the text as we have it—embarks abruptly on an interpretation of the passage from Leviticus 13:5–49. Here anyone showing signs of what may be leprosy is told to go to the priest Aaron, or to one of his sons, who will consider whether it is indeed leprosy. If it is, the priest shall separate that person from the community for seven days, and, if the

[3] See above, chap. 4, note 2.

leprosy has not disappeared, for an additional seven days. Then, if the leprosy has disappeared, the priest shall cleanse the person, and also see to certain provisions for the cleansing of the individual's infected garments (III.3–5).

The passage, Eubolius says, is rightly to be understood spiritually, and can be by anyone except those to whom the Gospel remains hidden, and who are thus among the lost (2 Cor. 4:3; 1 Cor. 1:18). The one who understands the Gospel as the image of things unseen (Heb. 10:1) will rise up on the wings of the Spirit of God. The fusion of elements here follows Origen, *Hom. in Lev.* VIII.5, on whom much of the allegory of the succeeding sections is dependent.

In the first of the Greek fragments, which now follows, Eubolius turns to the interpretation of the four kinds of leprosy in Leviticus 13:1–4 as referring to those things that we who "burst forth from our mother," "the Church,"[4] are to guard against. The four kinds of leprosy stand for the four kinds of passions that beset the soul. White stands for lust, grey for fear, green for envy and grief, and red for anger. The white and grey leprosies destroy healthy flesh, while the green and red ones produce scars in the soul like the results of burning wounds, so that the whole person is distressed. The white (lust) is the product of sexual intercourse; the grey (fear) is the result of contemplation of misfortune; the green (envy and grief) is so called because these inner dispositions make the countenance paler; and the red (anger) is such because the face is made red by it (V.1–4). The general elements of the interpretation once again depend on Origen, *Hom. in Lev.* VIII.5.[5] In the interest of saving space, we will omit reference to the Slavic translation and the Greek fragments of the following section (VI.1–VII.3), which essentially enlarge, in a quite predictable fashion, on the implications of this interpretation of Leviticus 13:1–4 for Christians struggling to avoid the passions there described.

In the following sections, Eubolius deals with the function of Aaron and his sons in the discernment and treatment of leprosy, taking "Aaron" to refer to Christ and his "sons" to the bishops who are responsible for healing the scars of leprosy. These latter (VII–VIII) are to oversee the removal of sinners from the communion of the Church and to examine them periodically with regard to their state of life (the "seven days" twice specified in Lv.). They are also to oversee the life of those who are healed (restored to communion) according to the rules and institutions (καὶ θεσμοί) of the Church (IX). And it is in this connection that the cleansing of the garments infected by leprosy are interpreted as referring to the correction of sinners,

[4] See the "Church as mother" in the interpretation of Rev. 12:1–6 in *Symp.* VIII.4ff.

[5] An intervening section, V.3–9, begins with a reference to Moses' sister having leprosy (Nm. 12:8, 10), also mentioned in this connection in Origen, In Num. VII.1. It proceeds to the Lord's command to go forth without staff, cloaks, or shoes (Mt. 10:10) as showing that we should live without involvement with the physical world.

not only with regard to their style of life but also to their correctness of thought (X–XII).

These are the sections to which F. van de Paverd has given careful attention, with regard to the evidence they offer of current disciplinary practice, and on the assumption that Methodius was in fact a bishop. We have already suggested that, however important the evidence, it shows no more than that Methodius was familiar with current disciplinary practice.[6] It remains for us here to note Methodius' dependence, in his treatment of the text of Leviticus as related to the practice, on Origen, *Hom. in Lev.* VIII.10 and XIV.3. Perhaps more important is the fact that Methodius here reflects a similarly liberal approach to the pastoral problems of reconciling penitents to that found in what is now commonly called Peter of Alexandria's *Canonical Letter.* With Peter, Methodius may be said to anticipate the concern with identifying and correcting inner motivations characteristic of the disciplinary practices of the Greek east in the following century.[7]

The New Departure of the Discussion

There is more than one piece of evidence to suggest that the Slavic translation has omitted reference to dialogical exchanges in the work. Thus, at XI.1, Eubolius is said to have engaged Euthymius, a person zealous of his reputation for piety, though we are left to speculate how their exchange relates to the general discussion, other than the possibility that Methodius here has in view those who err from an excessive concern with righteousness. If so, the passage may once again deal with issues of discipline and penance as seen in the light of the inner disposition of the person.

The most important evidence of such exchanges is the intervention of Sistelius (XIII.1), on the point of Eubolius' departure, to report a discussion with an intellectual and ascetic woman of Lycia with whom he had discussed this very passage of Leviticus.[8] The woman, whom Sistelius regards as a spiritual authority, agrees with the general principles of interpretation of the passage on which the discussion has taken place. But she insists on distinguishing between the cleansing of the garments of wool and linen (Lv. 13:47–48) as referring to the inner man and to the "man of dust." In this connection, she makes allusion to heresies that do not consider the outer man leprous, but which see the inner man as corruptible in thought (XIV.1–4). As she adds distinctions to be made between the warp and the woof of the garments mentioned in the passage in question, her purpose would seem to be to insist that both the outer and the inner man must be cleansed of sin, since the Church comprises the entire "cloak of the Lord." To this, she adds the suggestion that the warp consists of bishops and teachers, and the woof of the generality

[6] See above, chap. 1, note 7.

[7] See Vivian, *St. Peter of Alexandria,* chap. 3.

[8] So far as I am aware, no one has attempted to associated this ascetic and intellectual woman with the "lady of Telmessus" of *Symp.* Epilogue 293.

of Christians, the skin that the garments cover being the catechumens who have not yet cast off their "coats of skins" through admission to the communion of the Church (XV.1–5). And she continues to insist that the whole garment must become chaste (XV.6–XVI), and includes among its parts not merely the generality of Christians (woof), who must give up such things as usury, but the bishops (warp), who must despise temporal things as much as the rest (XVII).

Then the work concludes with an exhortation—whether by the woman or not is unclear—that we should rebuke the brother who sins (Mt. 7:21), lest all fall under the judgment of God (XVIII). It might be observed, in passing, that this exhortation seems to be as much a rebuke of bishops as otherwise, but does little to solve the problem of whether Methodius was a bishop or not. But in a larger sense, it is a call to the whole body of Christians to seek the perfection of chastity.

The Occasion and Place of the Sistelius

The occasion of the writing of the *Sistelius* remains obscure, at least in comparison with the occasions of the writing of the *De libero arbitrio,* the *Symposium,* and the criticisms of Origen in the *Aglaophon* and the *Xeno.* But the work is plainly to be associated with the *Symposium,* both in its purpose to deal with perfection in the Christian life and in its use of Origen's interpretations of the scriptural passages under discussion. It is a fair guess that it was a project preliminary to the writing of the *Symposium.* Many of its themes are found in the latter work, and it is hard, though perhaps not impossible, to think that it is an effort to summarize the main themes of the *Symposium.* It lacks the pointed references of the *Symposium* to the issues confronting those who embrace what they think to be chastity but turns out to be something less. It is not mentioned in the *De cibis,* and is certainly not likely to have contributed to the need to reply to criticism of the *Symposium* that is referred to in that letter. These conclusions, however, are not entirely negative. The *Sistelius* shows Methodius to be concerned with the same issues as those that engage his attention, albeit far more extensively, in the *Symposium,* and to have the same people—the generality of believers and the chaste—in view as does the latter work.

In this latter connection, particular interest attaches to the views of the ascetic woman, who clearly presents the life of chastity as the model for the generality of Christians as expounded in a more subtle fashion in the *Symposium.* In this case, however, the Slavic translation leaves us uncertain as to whether the work's final exhortation was given to her as its speaker.[9]

More than this we cannot say. The *Sistelius* remains an important part of the Methodian corpus, but more for the support it brings to the treatment of subjects discussed in other writings than for the light it sheds on the development of Methodius' thought in relation to the major writings of whose chronological location we are more certain.

---

[9] See above, note 8.

Appendix 2—
The Hymn of Thecla and the Purpose of the *Symposium*

The hymn of Thecla, with which the *Symposium* reaches its climax (Musurillo, *SP*., 284–92), has lately been a matter of interest because of its bearing on the cult of Thecla, both as we have evidence of it before Methodius' writing and as we know that it persisted into the fourth century and beyond. Both Macrina, sister of Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nyssa, and her mother, shared a devotion to Thecla. And Egeria, in the *Itinerarium Egeriae,* attests to her own interest in visiting the shrine of Thecla at Seleucia in Isauria and reports the evidence of devotion that she saw there.[1]

Indeed, the tradition of Thecla is currently an object of study in its own right because it held a central position among the traditions cultivated by ascetic women in the early Church. Such women are thought to have understood their Christian lives as involving them in opposing, and being opposed, by a male-dominated society, and even by the male-dominated Church. At the same time, the tradition of Thecla stands out among those currently being studied for its understanding of the true Christian life as concerned with "continence' (ἐγκράτεια), the teaching that set the rejection of sexual relations in a position of preeminence, because it involved detachment from the sexual relations that are the main point of contact with the evil material world. These two sources of interest in the Thecla tradition are not distinctly separate in current study, but serve together to promote discussion of issues long neglected.[2]

It is doubtless because of such current discussion that Methodius' use of the Thecla tradition has become a matter of interest, and a central element in the discussion of Methodius as a source of evidence concerning third-century asceticism. Thecla is, after all, both the crowned victor of the contest of the *Symposium* and the leader of the hymn with which the account of the "banquet" closes.

---

[1] *Itin.* XXIII.

[2] See Introduction, note 14, for a brief bibliographical reference to a constantly growing body of writing on these matters.

In our treatment of Methodius, we have been at pains to stress Thecla's function as the one who celebrates the practice of chastity as a life to which all Christians are called in principle, and which is to be undertaken within and for the baptismal community of the Church. Although her view is enunciated by other speakers as well, she is the one who specifically distinguishes the life of chastity from any rejection of sexual relations arising from the cosmological dualism that explains involvement with matter as the cause of human ills. In short, the Thecla of the *Symposium* is clearly intended by Methodius to be the Thecla of the tradition, recognized as such by allusions to the *Acts of Paul and Thecla,* with its account of her companionship with Paul, her rejection of maintaining ties with her family, and the circumstances of her martyrdom. Yet Methodius' Thecla is just as clearly a promoter of "orthodox" asceticism rather than of "continence," and an opponent of any kind of dualistic cosmology.[3]

[3] See above, chap. 3, on *Symp.* VIII. Our estimate of Methodius' view is similar to, and very different from, that of K. Aspegren, *The Male Woman* (Uppsala, Sweden: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 1990). In the last chapter of her work (chap. 9, 144–64), edited posthumously by R. Holte from preliminary versions of chapters on Clement and Methodius, the two are appropriately set together in connection with their views of "continence." However, as the title—with its reference to a familiar tag from Aristotle, commonly used by gnostic and orthodox writers of the period with regard to "male" rationality as superior to "female" emotion—suggests, Aspegren is concerned, as we are not, to argue that Methodius' view of the ascetic life is part of an effort to subordinate women to men. For her, Methodius' treatment of Thecla, in contrast to Clement's treatment of the potential of male and female for virtue as equal (151), is the ultimate example of the tendency to remake the female into the pattern of the male. A good deal of Methodius' problem would seem, in her view, to lie in his fairly common description of procreation, in the course of his defending the goodness of even illicit sexual relations in *Symposium* II.4–5, as originating in the male seed passively received by the female (154–58). But in any case, "Thecla appears as a model, if not a personification, of the perfect, that is the male, woman" (164). We should want to note, however, that both Clement's and Methodius's conventional references to becoming male, or simply human, in Christ, are actually quite few. See above, chap. 3, note 22, on the use of Origen's interpretation of Pharaoh's massacre of the male children. In both writers, larger issues of the redemption of the whole of humanity, male and female, predominate. While the familiar tag doubtless betrays an ancient stereotype, with broad and conflicted significance for understanding late antique society from our contemporary perspective, it seems a shame to read Methodius as Aspregen presumably planned to do. He doubtless does not treat females, in contrast to males, as might now be thought appropriate; nor, in fact, does Clement. Moreover, the particular "chaste," whom Methodius knew, and with whom he corresponded, happened to be women. But his view of the "chaste" clearly includes men too. As with Clement's "true gnostics," they are to lead the generality of believers to perfection. In *De lepra* LVIII, they are portrayed, by the woman speaker, in a far better light than those bishops who do not show themselves examples of perfection. Without intending

(footnote continued on next page)

The Hymn of Thecla:
Several Peculiarities

In our discussion of the hymn of Thecla, we have already considered its stylistic and paraliturgical character, and concluded that, in the form in which we have it, it is too elaborate for the actual liturgical use for which Musurillo suggests it was intended.[4] We left for further consideration several small but important peculiarities of the hymn when it is viewed in the light of Methodius' purpose in using Thecla to represent the true chastity to which all Christians are called.

For instance, the antiphon or refrain which accompanies the stanzas or verses, "Chastely I live for you, and holding my lighted lamps, my spouse, I go forth to meet you" (284 etc.), combines the images of the bride from the Song of Songs, used in Discourse VII, and of the wise virgins from Matthew 25:1–13, used in Discourse VI. In doing so it brings to mind Methodius' view, expressed in those discourses as well as in Thecla's own Discourse VIII, of the company of virgins as holding a leading place among the generality of Christians.

However, the stanzas sung by Thecla, though in general reflecting this view, contain certain dissonances with regard to the life of chastity in the list of exemplars of that life whose acts are celebrated. To be sure, stanzas 3–5, which rehearse the course of Thecla's life (285–86), do no more than recall details of the tradition: her refusal of marriage to a rich man; her escape from fire, flame, and ravenous wild beasts; and her having broken her attachments to women of her own age, her mother, and her family. Moreover, stanzas 1 and 2 reiterate the importance of virgins being awake when the bridegroom comes, and insist that wealth, love, and pleasures are to be abandoned (285). Stanzas 6–10 repeat the need for prudence as taught by the contrast of the wise with the foolish virgins (286–88). And, in stanza 7, Thecla even petitions the Queen—the eschatological Church—to accept those who are waiting to be received into the bridal chamber (287), thus repeating the picture of the company of virgins standing within the community of the Church as pictured in Discourse VII.9. All this is repetition of themes that have gone before.

Yet the list of exemplars of the life of chastity, in stanzas 11–18, contains significant peculiarities. After mentioning Abel as foreshadowing Christ in his death by his brother's hand (11.288), and Joseph as having resisted the burning passion of a woman (12.288), the death of Jephte at the hands of her father is mentioned as a type of the slain lamb (13.289). Immediately thereafter Judith is instanced as one who enticed the enemy general with her beauty but then slew him (13.289). Susanna is then mentioned as someone who resisted the desire of the judges (15.289). It is then generally declared

(footnote continued from previous page)

to discount the importance of the struggle of women for an equal place with men in the Church of our time, we may suggest that Methodius anticipated, and even helped effect, the unique place of women in the Church of the fourth century, of which Macrina's devotion to a Thecla similar to Methodius' may stand as an example.

[4] See chap. 3, esp. note 62.

that it would be better "to die than betray my marriage bed for you, women-mad men, and suffer God's eternal justice in fiery penalties." Thecla then adds, "Save me, O Christ, from these men" (16.290).

In seeming contrast to these stanzas, the list of exemplars now concludes with reference to John the Baptist, who was led to slaughter because he sought to protect his chastity (17.290),[5] and to the Virgin Mary, who was falsely accused of having violated the marriage bed (18.290). And it should be added that the concluding stanzas, 19–24, return to Methodius' main theme of the life of chastity as an anticipation of final communion with God.[6]

The peculiar features to which we direct attention are the stanzas referring to Jephte and Susanna as suffering at the hands of men, together with Thecla's plea to be saved from "women-mad men." It may be speculated that these stanzas reflect a genuine piece of tradition, whether or not associated with that about Thecla, that Methodius has felt obliged to include within the hymn. If so, it is possible that what we may call the "countervailing" references to Abel, Joseph, John the Baptist, and perhaps even the Virgin, have been introduced in order to correct the implication that it is women alone whose chastity is threatened by evil powers.

The Hymn and Methodius' Clientele

The unanswerable question raised by these peculiarities is that of the relation of those for whom Methodius wrote the *Symposium,* and their view of the ascetic life, to the traditions about Thecla and other ascetic women. Did Methodius know that those for whom he wrote were devoted to Thecla? Did he think them likely to have in mind the other exemplars whose sufferings at the hands of men he included among the stanzas of the hymn? Did he consequently seek to forestall what he thought might be a misinterpretation of the call of women to the ascetic life? Do any of these possibilities comport with the evidence of the ascetic and intellectual women, capable of discussing issues raised by Methodius' use of Origen, such as the correspondents of the *De cibis,* and the "lady of Telmessus," and the woman referred to in the *De lepra?*

There is no way to answer these intriguing questions. All that can reasonably be said is that Methodius was concerned to promote a view of the life of chastity, in relation to general Christian perfection, that was different, in a variety of ways, from the rejection of sexual relations implicit in the stanzas of the hymn (11–16) to which we have called attention, and presum-

[5] On the tradition that John's chastity was the cause of his death, recorded in Josephus and Ambrose, see Musurillo, *ACW,* 238, note 20.

[6] Since the notion that Methodius' purpose is the subjection of women to men has been advanced by Aspegren in *The Male Woman* (see note 3 above), it is worth noting that Musurillo's translation of stanza 22 (*ACW,* 157), "Paradise is no longer bereft of men" does not adequately represent the Greek, which has βροτῶν, bloody, or disfigured, "human beings."

ably in the tradition about Thecla as he knew of it as well. It was for this reason, perhaps, that he used Thecla as the chief exponent of his own views, in opposition to views that he regarded as insufficiently Christian in their understanding of the nature of evil and the place of the Church in the economy of salvation.

Abbreviations

Citations of works from series of texts, translations, and journals normally occur in full at their first appearance, and in abbreviated form subsequently. Citations of classical and patristic writings commonly appear in abbreviated form. In the latter case, the abbreviations are those of G. W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), ix–xliii, and H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951), xiv–xlviii, except where simpler or currently more familiar abbreviations seem appropriate.

Texts, Translations, and Journals

AC	*Antike und Christentum*
ACW	*Ancient Christian Writers*
ANF	*Ante-Nicene Fathers*
ATR	*Anglican Theological Review*
Aug	*Augustinianum*
BLE	*Bulletin de Littérature Ecclésiastique*
Did	*Didaskalia*
FC	*Fathers of the Church*
GCS	*Griechische Christliche Schriftsteller*
Greg.	*Gregorianum*
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
LXX	*Septuaginta*
NRT	*Nouvelle Revue Théologique*
OCP	*Orientalia Christiana Perodica*
PG	*Patrologia Graeca*
PL	*Patrologia Latina*
PO	*Patrologia Orientalis*
RHPR	*Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses*
Sal	*Salesianum*
SC	*Sources Chrétiennes*
SP	*Studia Patristica*
ST	*Studia Theologica*
TU	*Texte und Untersuchungen*

ZKT	*Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie*
ZNW	*Zeitschrift für neutestamentlichen Wissenschaft*

Classical and Patristic Writings

Adamantius
Adam. *Dialogus de recta in deum fide*

Albinus/Alcinous
Did. *Didaskalikos*

Alexander of Aphrodisias
De fato. *De fato*

Aristotle
Cat. *Categoriae*
EN *Ethica Nicomachea*

Arius
Ep. ad Alex. *Epistola ad Alexandrum Alexandrinum*
Ep. ad Eus. Nic. *Epistola ad Eusebium Nicomediensem*

Athanasius
De decr. *De decretis Nicaenae synodi*

Athenagoras
De res. *De resurrectione*
Supp. *Supplicatio*

Basil of Caesarea
Hex. *Homiliae in hexaëmeron*

Clement of Alexandria
Paed. *Paedagogus*
Prot. *Protrepticus*
Strom. *Stromateis*

Egeria
Itin. *Itinerarium Egeriae*

Epiphanius of Salamis
Pan. *Panarion*

Eusebius of Caesarea
HE *Historia ecclesiastica*
Praep. Ev. *Praeparatio evangelica*

Eustathius of Antioch
Engast. *De engastrimytho contra Origenem*

Gregory of Nyssa
De an. et res. *De anima et resurrectione*
De hom. Opif. *De hominis opificio*

Hippolytus
Haer. *Rufutatio omnium haeresium*

Irenaeus
AH *Adversus haereses*
Dem. *Demonstratio*

Jerome
C. Ruf. *Contra Rufinum*
De vir. illus. *De viris illustrisibus*

Justin Martyr
Apol. *Apologetica*
De res. *De resurrectione*
Dial. *Dialogus cum Tryphone Judaeo*

Methodius
C. Porph. *Contra Porphyrium*
De cib. *De cibis*
De creat. *De creatis*
De lepra *De lepra*
De lib. arbit. *De libero arbitrio*
De res. *De resurrectione*
De sang. *De sanguisuga*
Symp. *Symposium* (also Disc. for individual discourses)
De vita *De vita*

Origen
C. Cels. *Contra Celsum*
Dial. Herac. *Dialogue with Heraclitus*
In Cant. *Commentarius in Canticum Canticorum*
In Ex. Hom. *Homiliae in Exodi*
In Ez. *Homiliae in Ezechielis*
In Gen. Hom. *Homiliae in Genesis*
In Jn. *Commentarii in Joannem*
In Lev. hom. *Homiliae in Leviticus*
In Mt. *Commentariorum in Matthaeum libri 10–17*
In Num. *Homiliae in Numeri*
In Rom. *Commentarii in Romanos*
Mart. *Exhortatio ad martyrium*
PA *De principiis* (Περὶ ἀρχῶν)
Sel. In Gen. *Selecta in Genesis*

Pamphilus-Eusebius
Apol. pro Orig. *Apologia pro Origene*

Philo
De opif. mundi *De opificio mundi*

Philocalia Origenis
Philoc. *Philocalia Origenis*

Photius
Bib. *Bibliotheca*

Plato
Phaedo *Phaedo*
Phaedr. *Phaedrus*
Protag. *Protagoras*
Symp. *Symposium*
Theat. *Theaetetus*
Tim. *Timaeus*

Plotinus
Enn. *Ennead*

Plutarch
Plat. quaest. *Platonicae quaestiones,* in *Moralia* XIII

Polycarp
Ep. ad Phil. *Epistola ad Philippenses*

Porphyry
Philos. Orac. *De philosophia ex oraculis,* in Augustine, *De Civitate dei* IX.23
Sent. *Sententiae ad intelligibilia ducenes*

Ptolemy
Ep. ad Floram. *Epistola ad Floram* in Epiphanius, *Panarion* XXXIII.3–7

Socrates
HE *Historia ecclesiastica*

Tatian
Orat. *Oratio ad Graecos*

Taurus
In Tim. In Philoponis, *De aeternitate mundi* VI.21

Tertullian
Adv. Hermog. *Adversus Hermogenem*
De carn. Christi *De carne Christi*
De res. carni *De resurrectione carnis*

Theophilus of Antioch
Ad Aut. *Ad Autolycum*

Bibliography

Methodius' Writings

Honorific mention should be made of J. P. Migne, "Methodii Episcopi et Maryris Omnia Opera," *Patrologia Graeca,* vol. 18 (Paris: Migne, 1857), but it is not otherwise listed here. H. Musurillo, trans., *St. Methodius: A Treatise on Chastity,* Ancient Christian Writers, no. 27 (Westminster, U.K.: Newman, 1958) appears among the books and articles cited, but should be studied together with his edition of the *Symposium* listed here. What follows, practically speaking, are simply the works through which we currently have our best access to the text of Methodius' writings.

Bonwetsch, N., ed. "Methodius." *Griechische Christliche Schriftsteller der Ersten Drei Jahrhunderte,* no. 27. Leipzig: Hinrich, 1917.

Holl, K., ed. "Epiphanius, Ancoratus, und Panarion." *GCS* 31. Leipzig: Hinrich, 1922.

Musurillo, H., ed. and trans. *Méthode d'Olympe: "Le Banquet."* Sources Chrétiennes, no. 95. Paris: Cerf, 1963.

Robinson J. A., ed. *"The Philocalia" of Origen.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1893.

Vaillant, A., ed. and trans. "Le *De Autexousio* de Méthode d'Olympe: Version Slave et texte Grec édités et traduits en Français." *Patrologia Orientalis* 22, no. 5, 631–888. Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1930.

van den Sande Bakhuyzen, W. H. "Dialog des Adamantius." *GCS* 4. Leipzig: Hinrich, 1901.

Books and Articles Cited

Alexandre, M. "Protologie et eschatologie chez Grégoire de Nysse. " In *Arché e Telos: L'antropologia di Origene e di Gregorio di Nissa,* 122–59. Edited by U. Bianchi and H. Crouzel. Milan: Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, 1981.

Amand, D. *Fatalisme et liberté dans l'antiquité grecque: Récherche sur l'argumentation morale antifataliste de Carneade chez les philosophes grecs et les théologiens chrétiens des quatre premiers siècles.* Louvain: Bibliothèque de l'Université, 1945.

Andresen, G. "Justin und der mittlerer Platonismus." *ZNW* 42 (1956): 952ff. Armstrong, A. H., ed. *Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967.

Aspegren, K. *The Male Woman: A Feminist Ideal in the Early Church.* Upsala: Acts Universitatis Upsaliensis, 1990.

Balas, D. "Plenitudo Humanitatis: The Unity of Human Nature in the Thought of Gregory of Nyssa." In *Disciplina Nostra,* Patristic Monograph Series no. 6, 115–31. Edited by D. F. Winslow. Philadelphia: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1979.

Bardy, G. *Récherches sur l'histoire du texte et des versions latines du "De principiis" d'Origène.* Paris: Champion, 1923.

Barnard, L. W. *Athenagoras: A Study in Second-Century Christian Apologetic.* Paris: Beauchesne, 1972.

———. "Athenagoras' *De Resurrectione:* The Background and Theology of a Second-Century Treatise on the Resurrection." *ST* 30 (1976): 1–42.

Barnes, T. D. "Methodius, Maximus, and Valentinus." *JTS,* n.s., 37(1979): 353–68.

Bauer, J. "Corpora orbiculata." *ZKT* 82 (1950): 333–41.

Biamonti, A. "L'etica di Metodio d'Olimpo" and "L'escatologia di Metodio d'Olimpo." *Revista Trimestrale di Studi Filosofice e Religiosi* 3 (1922): 272–98 and 4 (1923): 182–202.

Bianchi, U., ed. *La Tradizione dell' Enkrateia.* Rome: Edizioni Dell' Ateneo, 1985.

Bonwetsch, N. *Die Theologie des Methodius von Olympus.* Berlin: Weidmann, 1903.

Boström, F. *Studier till den grekiska teologins frälsingsläre mod särkild hänsyn till Methodius av Olympus och Athanasius av Alexandria.* Lund: Ohlsson, 1932.

Brown, P. *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1988.

Buchheit, V. *Studien zu Methodios von Olympus.* Berlin: Akadamie, 1958.

Buonaiuti, E. "The Ethics and Eschatology of Methodius of Olympus," *HTR* 14 (1921): 255–66.

Chadwick, H. "Origen, Celsus, and the Resurrection of the Body." *HTR* 41 (1948): 83–102.

Clark, E. A. *The Origenist Controversy.* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992.

Corsini, E. "Plerome humain et plerome cosmique chez Grégoire de Nysse." In *Écriture et culture philosophique dans la pensée de Grégoire de Nysse,* 111–26. Edited by M. Harl. Leiden: Brill, 1971.

Crouzel, H. "La Doctrine origénienne du corps résuscité." *BLE* 81 (1980): 175–200, 241–66.

———. "Les critiques adresées par Méthode et ses contemporains à la doctrine origénienne du corps resuscité." *Greg.* 53 (1972): 69ff.

———. "Le thème platonicien du 'véhicule de l'âme' chez Origène." *Did.* 7 (1977): 225–37.

———. "Mort et immortalité selon Origène." *BLE* 79 (1978): 81–96.

———. *Origen: The Life and Thought of the First Great Theologian.* Translated by A. S. Worrall. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1989.

———. *Théologie de l'image de dieu chez Origène.* Paris: Aubier, 1956.

Daley, Brian E. *The Hope of the Early Church.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

———. "Origen's *De principiis:* A Guide to the 'Principles' of Christian Scriptural Interpretation." Paper presented to the North American Patristic Society, Loyola University of Chicago, 1994.

Daniélou, J. *From Shadows to Reality.* Translated by W. Hibberd. London: Burns and Oates, 1960.

———. *Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture,* Vol. 2: *A History of Early Christian Doctrine before the Council of Nicaea.* Translated by J. A. Baker. London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1973.

———. "L'Apocatastase chez saint Grégoire de Nysse." *Rècherches des Sciences Religieuses* 30 (1940): 328–47.

———. "La Fête des Tabernacles dans l'exegèse patristique." *SP* 1 (1951): 262–79.

———."La Typologie de la semaine dans le christianisme primitif. " *Vigiliae Christianae* 2 (1948): 1–16.

———. *L'Etre et le temps chez Grégoire de Nysse.* Leiden: Brill, 1970.

———. *Origen.* Translated by W. Mitchell. New York: Sheed and Ward, 1955.

Deckow, J. *Dogma and Mysticism in Early Christianity: Epiphanius of Cyprus and the Legacy of Origen.* Patristic Monograph Series, no. 13. Macon, Ga.: Mercer, 1988.

——— "Origen and Corporeality: The Case of Methodius' *On the Resurrection."* In *Origeniana Quinta,* 509–18. Edited by R. J. Daly. Louvain: Peeters, 1992.

Dennis, T. J. "Gregory on the Resurrection of the Body." In *The Easter Sermons of Gregory of Nyssa: Translation and Commentary,* Patristic Monograph Series, no. 9, 55–80. Edited by A. Spira and C. Klock. Philadelphia: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1981.

Diekamp, F. "Über den Bischofssitz des hl. Märtyrers and Kirchenväters Methodius." *Theologische Quartelschrift* 109 (1928): 285–308.

Dihle, A. *The Theory of Will in Classical Antiquity.* Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1982.

Dillon, J. M., trans. *Alcinous: The Handbook of Platonism.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993.

———. *The Golden Chain: Studies in the Development of Platonism and Christianity.* Aldershot, U.K.: Variorum, 1990.

———. *The Middle Platonists.* Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1977.

Dolger, F. J. "Ein Wahlspruch für wissenschaftlich Redestreit bei Methodius von Philippi." *AC* 6 (1950): 132–33.

Farges, J. *Idées morales et religieuses de Méthode d'Olympe.* Paris: Beauchesne, 1929.

———, trans. *Méthode d'Olympe: "Du libre arbitre."* Paris: Beauchesne, 1929.

———, trans. *Méthode d'Olympe: "Le Banquet des dix vierges."* Paris: Gabalda, 1932.

Fendt, L., trans. *Des heiligen Methodius von Olympus: Gastmahl oder Jungfräulichkeit.* Munich: Schermann, 1911.

Festugière, A. M. "Le Corps glorieux 'sphéroide' chez Origene." *RHPR* 43 (1959): 81–86.

Florovsky, G. V. "St. Athanasius' Concept of Creation." In *Aspects of Church History,* Collected Works of Georges Florovsky, Vol. 4, 36–62. Belmont, Mass.: Norland, 1975.

Fritschel, G. *Methodius von Olympus und seine Philosophie.* Leipzig: Poschel und Trepte, 1897.

Gaith, J. *Le Conception de la liberté chez Grégoire de Nysse.* Paris: Vrin, 1953.

Grant, R. M. "Athenagoras or Pseudo-Athenagoras?" *HTR* 47 (1954): 121–29.

———. *Greek Apologists of the Second Century.* Philadelphia: Westminster, 1988.

———. *The Letter and the Spirit.* New York: Macmillan, 1957.

Hanson, R. P. C. *Allegory and Event.* London: SCM, 1959.

———. *Origen's Doctrine of Tradition.* London: SCM, 1954.

———. *Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy, 318–381.* Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1988.

Heine, R. E. *Perfection in the Virtuous Life.* Patristic Monograph Series, no. 2. Edited by D. F. Winslow. Philadelphia: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1975.

Helms, C. R. *The Apocalypse in the Early Church: Christ, Eschaton, and Millennium.* D. Phil. diss., Oxford University, 1991.

Hennessey, L. R. "A Philosophical Issue in Origen's Eschatology: The Three Senses of Incorporeality." In *Origeniana Quinta,* 373–80.

Hill, C. *Regnum Caelorum.* Oxford: University Press, 1991.

Hobbel, A. J. "The *imago dei* in the Writings of Origen." *SP* 21 (1989): 300–307.

Hoffmann, M. *Der Dialog bei den Christlichen Schriftstellern der ersten vier Jahrhunderte.* Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1966.

Hug, A. "Symposion-Literatur," in *Real-Encyclopädie der klassischen Altertumwissenschaft.* Ed. A. Paulys, G. Wissowa, and W. Kroll, Series II, Vol. 4A, cols. 1274–83. Stuttgart:J. B. Metzler, 1932.

Ivanka, E. von. *Plato Christianus: Überahme und Umgestaltung des Platonismus durch die Väter.* Einsiedeln, Germany: Johannes, 1964.

Jahn, A. S. *Methodius Platonizans.* Halle: 1865.

Kopecek, T. A. *A History of Neo-Arianism.* 2 vols. Patristic Monograph Series, no. 8. Philadelphia: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1979.

Laplace, J., and J. Daniélou, trans. *Grégoire de Nysse: "La Création de l'homme."* Sources Chrétiennes. Paris: Cerf, 1943.

Lebreton, J. *Histoire du dogme de la Trinité des origines au concile de Nicée.* Vol. 2. Paris: Beauchesne, 1928.

Leys, R. *L'Image de dieu chez Gregoire de Nysse.* Paris: Brouwer, 1951.

Lilla, S. R. C. *Clement of Alexandria: A Study in Christian Platonism and Gnosticism.* Oxford: University Press, 1971.

Loofs, F. *Leitfaden zum Studium der Dogmengeschichte,* Part I: *Dogmengeschichte der alten Kirche bis zur Ausbildung dergriechischen Orthodoxie.* 5th ed. Revised by K. Aland. Halle-Salle: Niemeyer, 1950.

Lyman, J. R. *Christology and Cosmology: Models of Divine Activity in Origen, Eusebius, and Athanasius.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993.

MacDonald, D. R., ed. *The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles.* Semeia, no. 38. Decatur, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1986.

———. *The Legend and the Apostle: The Battle for Paul in Story and Canon.* Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983.

Mambrino, J. "'Les Deux Mains de Dieu' dans l'oeuvre de saint Irenée." *NRT* 79 (1957): 355–70.

Mazzucco, C. "Il Millenarismo di Metodio di Olimpo di Fronte a Origene: Polemica o Continuita?" *Aug.* 26 (1986): 73–87.

Meijering, E. P. "Irenaeus' Relation to Philosophy in the Light of His Concept of Free Will." In *God Being History: Studies in Patristic Philosophy,* 19–30. Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1975.

———. *Orthodoxy and Platonism in Athanasius: Synthesis or Antithesis?* Leiden: Brill, 1974.

Merlan, P. *From Platonism to Neoplatonism.* 2d ed., rev. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960.

Mersch, E. *Le Corps mystique.* Paris: Aubier, 1951.

Murray, O., ed. *Sympotica: A Symposium on the Symposium.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990.

Musurillo, H., trans. *St. Methodius: "The Symposium: A Treatise on Chastity."* Ancient Christian Writers, no. 27 Westminster, Md.: Newman, 1958.

Norris, R. A. *God and World in Early Christian Thought.* New York: Seabury, 1965.

———. "Irenaeus on Soul." Paper presented to Ninth International Conference on Patristic Studies, Oxford, 1983.

———. "Theology and Language in Irenaeus of Lyons." *ATR* 74 (1994): 285–95.

———. "The Transcendence and Freedom of God in Irenaeus." In *Early Christian Literature and the Classical Intellectual Tradition,* 87–100. Edited by W. R. Schoedel and R. L. Wilken. Paris: Beauchesne, 1979.

Osiek, C. "The Widow as Altar: The Rise and Fall of a Symbol." *Second Century* 3 (1983): 159–69.

Otis, Brooks. "Cappadocian Theology as a Coherent System." In *Dumbarton Oaks Papers, No. 12,* 97–124. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958.

———. "Gregory of Nyssa and the Cappadocian View of Time." *SP* 14 (1976): 327ff.

———. "Nicene Orthodoxy and Fourth-Century Mysticism." In *Actes du XII Congrès des Études Byzantines,* vol. 2, 475–84. Belgrade: 1964.

Pagels, E. H. *The Gnostic Paul: Gnostic Exegesis of the Pauline Letters.* Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975.

Patterson, L. G. *The Anti-Origenist Theology of Methodius of Olympus.* Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1958.

———. "The Conversion of Diastema in the Patristic View of Time." in *Lux in Lumine: Essays to Honor W. Norman Pittenger,* 93–111. Edited by R. A. Norris. New York: Seabury, 1966.

———. "The Creation of the Word in Methodius' *Symposium." SP* 9 (1968): 240–50.

———. *"De libero arbitrio* and Methodius' Attack on Origen. " *SP* 14(1976): 160–66.

———. "Methodius' Millenarianism." *SP* 24 (1993): 306–15.

———. "Methodius and Origen on Creation." In *Origeniana Quinta,* 497–508.

———. "Nicaea to Constantinople: The Theological Issues." G*reek Orthodox Theological Review* 27, no. 4 (1983): 375–94.

———. "Notes on *De cibis* and Methodius' View of Origen." In *Origeniana Tertia,* 233–43. Edited by H. Crouzel. Rome: Editioni Dell'Ateneo, 1985.

———. "Origen: His Place in Early Greek Christian Thought." *SP* 18 (1982): 924–43.

———. "Origen, Methodius, and the Arian Dispute." *SP* 18 (1982): 912–23.

———. "Pleroma: The Human Plenitude from Irenaeus to Gregory of Nyssa." Paper presented to the North American Patristic Society, Loyola University of Chicago, 1986.

———. "Who Are the Opponents in Methodius' *De resurrectione?" SP* 19 (1989): 121–29.

Pelikan, J. *Christianity and Classical Culture: The Metamorphosis of Natural Theology in the Christian Encounter with Hellenism.* New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1993.

Pépin, J. "Platonisme et Stoicisme chez Méthode d'Olympe." In *Forma Future: Studi in onore del Cardinale Michele Pellegrino,* 126–44. Turin: Bottega d'Erasmo, :1975.

Perkins, P. *The Gnostic Dialogue: The Early Church and the Crisis of Gnosticism.* New York: Paulist Press, 1980.

Pinault, H. *Le Platonisme de Saint Grégoire de Nazianze: Essai sur les relations du Christianisme et de l'Hellenisme dans son oeuvre théologique.* La Roche-sur-Yon: Romain, 1925.

Pouderon, B. *Athénagore d'Athènes: PhilosopheChrétien.* Paris: Beauchesne, 1989.

Prestige, G. "γεν[ν]ητός and Kindred Words in Eusebius and the Early Arians." *JTS* 2 (1923): 486–96.

Quensell, K. *Die wahre kirchliche Stellung und Tätigkeit des fälschlich so gennanten Bischofs Methodius von Olympus.* Diss., Heidelberg University, 1953.

Riggi, C. "Vita Christiana e dialogo liturgio nel *Symposio* di Metodio." *Salesianum* 37 (1975): 503–45.

Rist, J. M. "Basil's 'Neoplatonism': Its Background and Nature." In *Basil of Caesarea: Christian, Humanist, Ascetic,* 137–220. Edited by P. J. Fedwick. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1981.

Rordorf, W. "Tradition and Composition of the Acts of Thecla." In *The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles,* 43–52. Edited by D. R. Macdonald. Decatur, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1986.

Runia, D. T. *Philo in Early Christian Literature.* Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993.

Schibli, H. S. "Origen, Didymus, and the Vehicle of the Soul." In *Origeniana Quinta,* 381–91.

Schoedel, W. R., trans. *Athanagoras: "Legatio" and "De resurrectione."* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972.

Sharples, R. W., trans. *Alexander of Aphrodisias: "On Fate."* London: Duckworth, 1983.

Stead, G. C. *Divine Substance.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977.

———. "The Freedom of the Will and the Arian Controversy." In *Platonismus und Christentum: Festschrift für Heinrich Dörrie,* 245–57. Edited by H. D. Blume and F. Mann. Munster: Aschendorf, 1983.

———. *Philosophy in Christian Antiquity.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Torjesen, K. J. "'Body,' 'Soul,' and 'Spirit' in Origen's Theology of Exegesis." *ATR* 67 (1995): 17–30.

———. *Hermeneutical Procedure and Theological Method in Origen's Exegesis.* Berlin: De Gruyter, 1985.

Trigg, J. W. "Origen, Man of the Church." In *Origeniana Quinta,* 51–56.

Ubaldi, P., trans. S. *Metodio d'Olimpo: "Il convito delle dieci vergini. "* Turin: Editrice Internationale, 1926.

van den Paverd, F. "Confession (exagoreusis) and Penance (exomologesis) in the *De lepra* of Methodius of Olympus." *OCP* 44 (1978): 309–41 and 45 (1979): 45–74.

van Unnick, W. C. "Le Nombre des élus dans la première epitre de Clément." *RHPR* 42 (1962): 237–46.

Vitores, A. *Identidad entra el cuerpo muerto y resucitado en Origenes: Segun el "De resurrectione" de Metodio de Olimpo.* Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1971.

Vivian, T. *St. Peter of Alexandria: Bishop and Martyr.* Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988.

Voss, B. R. *Der Dialog in der Frühchristlichen Literatur.* Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1970.

Wiles, M. F. "Eternal Generation." *JTS,* n.s., 12 (1961): 284–91.

———. "In Defence of Arius." *JTS,* n.s., 13 (1962): 339–47.

Wilken, R. L. *The Land Called Holy: Palestine in Christian History and Thought.* New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1992.

Williams, R. D. *Arius: Theology and Heresy.* London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1987.

Zeoli, A., trans. *Metodio d'Olimpo: "Il Banchete delle dieci vergini."* Florence: Liberia Editrice, 1952.

Index of Names

1—
Ancient

A

Albinus (Alcinous), 46n18, 213, 214, 225

Alexander of Aphrodisias, 52, 62n38, 104n4, 223n31

Aristotle, 51–52, 59, 223n31

Arius, 217–18, 219, 220, 225n35

Athanasius, 210n14, 225n35

Athenagoras, 47n19, 57, 146n7, 158, 158n23, 162n26

Atticus, 46n18, 213, 225

B

Basil of Caesarea, 186n52

C

Clement of Alexandria, 8–9, 18, 20, 40, 43n15, 47n19, 55, 66, 71, 75, 80n20, 89n30, 90n31, 102n46, 112–13, 120, 134n15, 134–35, 138, 150n13, 188, 202, 223, 241n3

D

Dialogue of Adamantius, 22, 32, 84, 61, 62, 149n11

E

Egeria, 240n1

Epiphanius, 12, 17, 22n12, 23, 149n11

Eusebius of Caesarea, 1, 15, 16, 22, 31, 36n2, 38

Eustathius of Antioch, 5, 20, 21n9, 23

Eustratius of Constantinople, 180n47

G

Gregory of Nyssa, 5, 23, 105n49, 144n5, 148n10, 157n22, 162n26, 169n34, 178n45, 186–97, 198

H

Hermogenes, 36, 43, 50–51, 56n32, 62

Hippolytus, 36n2, 43n15, 62, 214

I

Irenaeus, 7–9, 40n13, 43n15, 46n18, 47n19, 50, 55, 65–66, 71, 73, 75n12, 77, 112, 115n58, 120, 135n17, 162n26, 165, 165n29, 181, 188, 218, 224

J

Jerome, 11, 15–16, 17, 23, 26, 38n7, 52n27, 223n31

John of Damascus, 17, 18

Justin Martyr, 46n18, 90n31, 93n36, 102n46, 120, 151n14, 165

M

Methodius:

dates, 19–21, 27–28, 33, 123;

Christian teacher, 18–19, 36, 41, 63, 81n21;

Lycian environment, 18, 42–43, 68, 149, 167;

"Bishop and Martyr," 15, 17, 18–21;

Olympus, 18;

women correspondents, 10, 27, 64n2, 66, 240, 243–44;

chronology of the writings, 26–28, 31–32;

dialogue style, 11–13, 39–40, 66n3, 67–68;

access to Origen's works, 123–25;

liturgical allusions, 3n7, 30, 68, 70, 80, 85n24, 93n36, 98n41, 118;

medical interest, 54, 149n12, 154–55, 162n26

O

Origen, 1, 3–7, 18, 20, 29, 30–31, 31–33, 34, 37, 40n13, 43n15, 45n17, 46n18, 50–51, 52n25, 55, 58, 60, 61n37, 67, 71, 75n12, 80n20, 83, 86n26, 88n29, 89n30, 90n31, 93n36, 102n46, 112–13, 120–22, 125–40, 143, 144n5, 152n15, 162n26, 172, 177, 178n45, 180n47, 182n49, 184–86, 204, 207, 208–9, 224–25, 236, 237, 238, 241n3

P

Pamphilius-Eusebius *Apologia,* 15, 18, 21, 26, 31, 148n9

Peter of Alexandria, 5n10, 238

Philo, 58, 207

Philocalia Origenis, 22, 31, 38, 40n13, 61

Photius, 11, 17, 18, 23, 38n7, 149n11, 178n45;, 200–203, 204, 206–9, 214

Plato, 11, 40, 43n15, 45–46, 57–60, 67–68, 91, 96, 103n47, 127, 235

Plotinus, 52n27, 223, 225

Plutarch, 43n15, 213, 225

Porphyry, 52n27, 176n42, 223

R

Rufinus, 15, 22n12

S

Shepherd of Hermas, 68, 71

Socrates, 38n8, 200

T

Tatian, 47n19

Tertullian, 36n2, 43, 46n18, 47n19, 50–51, 56, 146n7, 157n22, 164n28, 165n29, 176, 177, 214

Theophilus of Antioch, 36n2, 46n18, 50, 56n32

2—
Modern

A

Alexandre, M., 75n12

Amand, D., 55n31

Andresen, G., 46n18

Aspegren, K., 84n22, 241n3, 243n6

B

Balas, D., 75n12

Bardy, G., 144n5

Barnard, L. W., 158n23

Barnes, T. D., 21n9

Bauer, J., 178n45

Biamonti, A., 2n3

Bianchi, U., 9n14

Bonwetsch, N., 1, 3n5, 22n10 24n15, 40nn12&13, 78n16, 113n56, 147n6, 149n11, 168n32, 200n2, 201n3, 235n1

Bostrom, F., 218n25

Brown, P., 9n14, 21n9

Buchheit, V., 2n2, 12n16, 22n10, 118n62

Buonauiti, E., 2n3

C

Chadwick, H., 173n38, 178n45

Clark, E. A., 5n8, 145n6

Corsini, E., 75n12

Crouzel, H., 89n30, 100n44, 146nn6&7, 153n16, 173n38, 180n47, 224n33

D

Daley, B. E., 62n38, 107n50, 112n54, 205n10

Daniélou, J., 2, 3n4, 105n49, 106n50, 127n5, 128n9, 148n10, 190n61, 225n34

Deckow, J., 5n8, 145n6, 149n11

Dennis, T. J., 187n53, 191n61, 196n72

Diekamp, F., 17n3

Dihle, A., 55n31

Dillon, J., 45n16, 46n18, 223n31, 225n34, 225n35

F

Farges, J., 1, 22n10, 37n5, 64n1, 78n16, 91n34, 99n42, 130n11, 138n24, 200n2, 235n1

Fendt, L., 64n1

Festugière, A. J., 178n45

Florovsky, G. V., 45n17

Fritschel, G., 1n1

G

Goetchius, E. V. N., 45n17

Grant, R. M., 57n33, 130n11, 147n8, 158n23

H

Hanson, R. P. C., 127n5, 130n11, 205n10, 219n26, 227n36

Heine, R. E., 5n9, 148n10

Helms, C. R., 106n50

Hennessey, L. R., 173n38

Hill, C., 106n50

Hobbel, A. J., 89n30

Hoffmann, M., 3n6

J

Jahn, A., 1n1

K

Kopececk, T. A., 220n27

L

Lebreton, J., 45n17

Leys, R., 189n58

Lilla, S. R. C., 8n13

Lyman, J. R., 55n31, 225n35

M

MacDonald, D. R., 9n14, 69n7

Mambrino, J., 218n25

Mazzucco, C., 106n50

Meijering, E. P., 225n35

Meredith, A., 96n40, 106n50

Merlan, P., 45n16

Musurillo, H., 2, 17n3, 19n6, 24n13, 64nn1&2, 65, 68n5, 69–70, 77n14, 78n16, 87n28, 92–93, 95n39, 99nn42&43, 101, 113n56, 118n62, 130n11, 134, 138n24, 174n40, 210n14, 243nn5&6

N

Norris, R. A., 56n31, 61n37, 181n48, 224n32

O

Osiek, C., 87n28

Otis, B., 5n8, 148n10, 169n34, 188n54, 230n1

P

Pagels, E., 56n31

Pelikan, J., 187n53, 194n65

Pépin, J., 2n3, 43, 47n19, 130n11

Pinault, H., 230n1

Pouderon, B., 158n23

Prestige, G., 45n17

Q

Quensell, K., 17n3

R

Riggi, C., 3n7

Rist, J. M., 223n31

Robinson, J. A., 13n17, 16n2, 38

Rortdorf, W., 69n7

Runia, D., 130n11, 158n23

S

Schibli, H. S., 180n47

Schoedel, W. R., 6n11, 158n23

Sharples, R. W., 56n31

Stead, G. C., 37n4, 43, 43n15, 217n23

T

Torjesen, K. J., 103n11

Trigg, J. W., 171n36

U

Ubaldi, P., 64n1

V

Vaillant, A., 2, 13n17, 16n2, 17n3, 18n5, 22n12, 24n15, 28n18, 35n1, 36n3, 37nn4&5, 38nn9&11, 40n13, 43n15, 51n23, 58n34, 59n35, 61n36, 200n2, 212n16, 222n29

Van De Paverd, F., 3n7, 19n7, 238

Van Unnick, W. C., 75n12

Vitores, A., 3n5, 5n8

Vivian, T., 5n10, 238n7

Voss, B. R., 3n6, 12n16, 63n3, 68n4

W

Wiles, M. F., 3n4

Wilken, R. L., 56n31, 84n22

Williams, R. D., 3n4, 209n13, 218n24, 219n26, 220n27, 225n35, 227n36

Z

Zahn, 13n17, 38

Zeoli, A., 64n1

Index of Subjects

A

apokatastasis, 63, 65, 70, 83, 99, 105n49, 179

B

Basilides, 152n15

Begetting and creating:

distinction of, 45n17, 159–60, 210n14;

"eternal" begetting and creating, 60, 135–36, 199, 208–13

See also being and becoming

Begetting of the Word, 100–102, 131–33, 214–19

Being and becoming (uncreated and created), 44–47, 49–51, 90n31, 120–21, 159–60, 180, 181, 189, 208–11, 214

C

Chastity (virginity), 9–11, 64–70, 72–81, 82–84, 87, 90–92, 93–94, 103–4, 114, 116, 116–18, 167, 235, 236, 239;

contrast with continence, 10, 69n7, 104, 114, 116–18;

relation to marriage, 74, 76;

function in the community of the baptized, 11, 66, 81, 93–94

Christ:

Adam-Christ typology, 76–79;

designated "archtypal virgin," 73, 74, 115;

Baptism of, 100;

relation to Church, 79–81;

use of "incarnation," 100, 131, 133

See also begetting of the Word, soul and Wisdom

Continence. *See* chastity

E

Evil:

as quality or substance, 48–51, 155;

as genus or species, 48–51

F

Fall and restoration of souls, 136–37, 144–55, 181–84

Feast of Tabernacles (body as "tabernacle"), 87–88, 91–92, 105–13, 126n1, 139–40, 160, 161, 163–64, 166–68, 171–81

Free will (self-determination), 36n2, 52–54, 55n31, 60–61, 75, 99–100, 102–4, 120–21, 157–58, 161

G

Gnosticism. *See* Basilides, Marcion, Valentinus

God:

beyond knowing, 96–97, 99, 108, 127–28, 220–22, 225–26;

self-sufficiency of, 202, 210, 221–23;

use of "trinity," 99, 101, 134

See also being and becoming, subordinationism

H

Human nature:

distinction of mind, soul, and body, 84, 86, 109n52;

body-soul unity (morphe *), 156–57, 181, 190, 193n63;

on Origen on bodily form 171–74, spiritual body 177–78;

human being as microcosm, 162, 186n52, 191, 192n62;

soul as corporeal, 180–81, 192

See also free will, image and likeness, plenitude of humanity, soul and Wisdom

I

Image and likeness (creation in), 73, 88–91, 138–39, 157n22. 187–89. *See also* plenitude of humanity, soul and Wisdom

K

Kleinasiatischen Schule (Methodius as part of), 128n9, 230n2

M

Marcion (Marcionism), 36n3, 50, 75, 102, 115n58, 126, 130, 236

Marriage. *See* chastity

Microcosm. *See* human nature

Millenarianism, 70, 106–13, 167

P

Plenitude of humanity, 72, 74, 75n12, 107, 108, 187, 188, 195

S

Scriptures (senses, use of), 27, 28, 40–41, 72, 114, 125–30, 147, 149–50, 175, 204–6

Soul and Wisdom (relation of), 88–91

T

Thecla, 9n14, 10, 20, 64, 67, 68, 69, 95, 96, 104, 118–20, 127, 240–44. *See also* "Methodius: women correspondents"

Time (intervals of), 168–70, 189–90, 195, 216n22

V

Valentinus (Valentinianism), 36, 50, 55n31, 62, 75, 98, 102, 115n58, 130, 152n15, 179n46, 184

Virtue and temptation, 69, 118

Methodius of Olympus: Divine Sovereignty, Human Freedom, and Life in Christ
was composed in Electra by Brevis Press, Bethany, Connecticut; printed on
60-pound Natural Smooth and bound by Braun-Brumfield, Inc.,
Ann Arbor, Michigan; and designed and produced by
Kachergis Book Design, Pittsboro, North Carolina.